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Hot Spring

A Journal of Commitment

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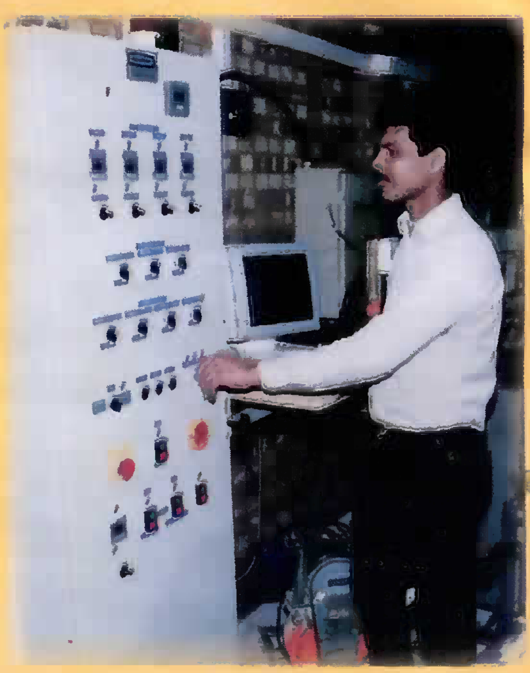

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Comment

Tut, Tut, the use of language!

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and her uncle the War Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte have a habit of breaking into violent language every time their war goes against them. Ratwatte once branded the Tigers as *"jackals"*, because he could not stomach a major reverse on the battle front. Understandable, but still unseemly for a man who has a whole army, navy and air force at his command. There is an old adage that says: "Speak softly,and carry a big stick, and you will go far". The problem with "General" Ratwatte is that he carries a big stick, but does not speak softly; which possibly is the reason why he is unable to/go far with his pretentiously named Operation "Jaya Sikuru" (Sure of Victory) which after more than five months got stuck at Puliyankulam, only ten miles on the promised land route to Jaffna. Unable to face their own domestic constituency, tall claims are today being made that the final push to Jaffna has now begun.! Absolutely untrue of course, but who cares ? Not the international news agencies anyway, because they, poor things, have to earn a living.

The October 15 bombing in Colombo was certainly a highly provocative act, but Madame President's vocal reaction was even louder than the blast near the World Trade Centre. *"Animals"*, she hissed. She was prepared to talk "even with *devils"* she said, because that was the "only way out". Any human being, she stressed "who is not willing to use their brains or their capacity to negotiate is *not quite human.* These were not said in private. She was addressing a Press conference. What epithets from the head of a State ! *"Animals"! "Devils"!*

The President's excesses with the English language did not however begin with the recent bombing. A month before that, interviewed by ASIAWEEK (Sept.19), she said "Prabhakaran, in my opinion is a *ruthless, inhuman murderer...* Much earlier, talking to the Sri Lanka friendly INDIA TODAY, she came out with that naughty alliteration in describing the LTTE leader as *"a merciless megalomaniac".*

All these are not surprising. Any oppressor who meets with resistance from the oppressed will lose his or her patience. The difference in Sri Lanka is, the more determined the resistance to oppression, the more violent will be the language of the oppressor. Particularly if the oppressor's mother had an easier time with her subjects. Which of course was before the arrival in the scene of a man who is now a household word around the world .

S.S

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What They Say

"When we were having discussions with the LTTE, I exchanged 44 letters with Prabhakaran, the first time he ever wrote to any politician in the south".

- President Chandrika Kumaratunga, ASIAWEEK, Sept.19

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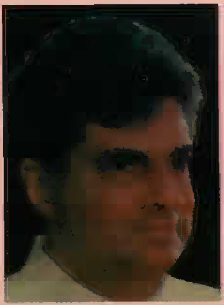


"He is talking nonsense. Every time, I have tried to speak to him, he comes with a different story".

-President Chandrika Kumaratunga on UNP leader leader Ranil Wicremasinghe, interview with THE HINDU

* * * * *

"The real ethnic war will begin if these proposals (in the devolution package) are implemented"

- Buddhist High priest Maduluwawe Sobitha

* * * * *

"They (the P.A.government) mishandled the whole thing. The government should have had discussions at the highest level with the LTTE. A senior minister should have led the government delegation, instead of sending officials"

- former Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel, in an interview with WEEKEND EXPRESS, Oct.18-19.

* * * * *

"...A further tank has been destroyed, two APCs captured and two helicopters have been damaged, in addition to the seizure of a number of 81 mm and 60mm mortars, heavy machine guns, over one million rounds of ammunition, more than 10,000 mortar rounds over 1000 rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) and over 6000 hand grenades. All these items were captured when the LTTE overan two forward supply depots of the army at Karappukkuthi and Vignanakulam a fortnight ago ..."

- Air Vice Marshal Harry Gunetilleke, WEEKENDEXPRESS, Oct.18-19

* * * * *

"There was an almighty explosion, all the glass blew in and and the doors flew out. There is an awful lot of smoke outside the building, the lifts are crooked and all the guests in the hotel up on the 11th floor are huddled together in the corridors

- Avtar Litt, Sunrise Radio Chief Executive, who was staying at the Hilton Hotel at the time of the Colombo explosion on Oct.15

* * * * *

International

"I treated Gerry Adams and the members of SinnFein in the same way I treat any human being. What is important in the situation here in Northern Ireland is that we do treat each other as human beings"

-Tony Blair after shaking hands with Gerry Adams at the first meeting of a British Prime Minister with Sinn Fein in 76 years.

* * * * *

"You traitor. You are contaminated. You'll need these after shaking hands with that IRA scum

- a woman throwing a pair of surgical gloves at Tony Blair in Belfast.

* * * * *

"I have met Netanyahu several times since his election and each time he promised me to respect the agreements: but he never kept his word':.. Even the Hebron accord signed by his government was never implemented. How can we trust a man who does not even respect his own signature ?"

- Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, speaking to the Arab daily AL-HAYAT

* * * * *

"Israel, as a Jewish state, should be wiped off the map"

-Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, spiritual leader of HAMAS, recently released from an Israeli prison, in interview with Swedish daily SVENSKA DAGBLADET

* * * * *

"It is presumptuous for a third-rate power like Britain to mediate in Jammu and Kashmir"

- reported statement by Indian Prime Minister I.K.Gujral, later denied

* * * * *

"TODAY'S TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS ARE TOMORROW'S GOVERNMENTS"

The Clinton administration's designation of 18 additional foreign political organizations as terrorist-supporting groups has met with condemnation by several civil liberties groups within America itself. They have denounced the 1996 law on which Secretary of State Madeline Albright's action was based and said the decision abridged constitutional rights of free speech and association.

The 18 foreign groups (including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) named on 8 October, were added to 12 groups that were subjected to similar sanctions by President Clinton in 1995, under an executive order specifically aimed at organizations he said were opposed to the Middle East peace process and engaged in terrorist activities that threaten US citizens.

David Cole, a professor of constitutional law at Georgetown University, said: "the entire premise of the law is guilt by association. I have no doubt that it will be declared unconstitutional. He added that "people have a right to support the lawful activities of any group that, they choose... Today's terrorist organizations are tomorrow's governments".

Acting on behalf of the Center for Constitutional Rights, a New York group, Cole recently won a suit against the government stopping the proposed deportation of eight people who contributed to one of the organizations included on the list, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

In the decision, judges on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in California declared that fund-raising for lawful purposes was protected by the Constitution,even if the groups also engaged . in terrorism. The Justice Department has appealed the decision, arguing that such activities could be lawfully barred.

Besides blocking travel here by the members of the designated groups, the government is empowered by this law to impound funds they hold in U.S.banks and to seek a 10-year prison term for those who give the groups funds, weapons or other tangible support. Roughly, 700,000 to 800,000 U.S.dollars in funds have been confiscated by the Treasury Department from the initial 12 groups, but State Department spokesman James P.Rubin speculated on 9 October that only "very small" amounts would be seized from the additional 18 groups.

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee denounced the move, noting that it makes even those donations for lawful activities by these groups - such as donations of blankets to orphanages operated by Hamas in Jordan - subject to Federal prosecution.

(From report by R.Jeffrey Smith, WASHINGTON POST)

From Tamil "terrorists" to "Hindu separatists"

WASHINGTON, Oct. 25. The U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright, has dubbed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which is fighting a 13-year war in Sri Lanka's predominantly Tamil northeast for a separate homeland, as ``Hindu separatists." Speaking about the terrible atrocities committed by people belonging to various religious denominations and ethnic groups, at the Catholic University on Thursday she said, ``in recent years, we have seen bloody acts of terrorism committed by Hindu separatists in Sri Lanka and Kurdish separatists in Turkey."

"U.S. softens stand towards Tamil Tiger rebels"

In a despatch from Washington meanwhile, T.V.Parasuram of the Press Trust of India (PTI) reports:

Oct.23: The United States has softened its stand towards Tamil militants saying the inclusion of the LTTE in the list of terrorist organisations did not involve any special U.S. help to the Sri Lankan government to deal with terrorism.

"We support a negotiated political settlement of the Sri Lankan crisis", Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfuth said.

"We designated the LTTE a terrorist organisation for the purpose of the anti-terrorism and effective death penalty act. We call upon the LTTE to stop its indiscriminate attacks and support a negotiated settlement of the conflict in Sri Lanka", he said.

"Last week's massive bomb attack in Colombo only underlines the importance of ending the fighting. We believe the Sri Lankan government's wide-ranging proposals for constitutional reforms are a solid basis for a peaceful solution to the tragic conflict" he said.

When asked about the apparent contradiction, U.S. officials denied there was any. Mr.Inderfuth said that the inclusion of the LTTE in the list of terrorist organisations under American law would curb its fund-raising activities in the US.

Asked whether this implies that the US will help the Sri Lankan government deal with LTTE's activities in Sri Lanka, Mr.Inderfuth said:- This is a domestic matter. This relates to what we will do within our country with respect to fund-raising and its assets It does not speak to any further cooperation we may have with the government of Sri Lanka. It very much relates to what we will do in this country.".

"With respect to the Sri Lankan government, we do have all the normal, strong bilateral relationship with them. **We have made it clear we will not engage directly in their insurgency and that we are not in a position of giving military assistance", Mr.Inderfuth said.**

Inderfuth: *A domestic matter*

"On the other hand,we have normal bilateral assistance with respect to international military training and other relationship and those will be continued. But in terms of their insurgency and their war in the north,dealing with the LTTE, this is something that is very much a Sri Lankan matter but we will do all we can within the confines of our law to assist", he said. ❏

"An imprudent diplomatic move"- LTTE

A special release from LTTE Headquarters in Tamil Eelam dated 10 October stated:-

We wish to express our deep dismay and displeasure over the decision of the U.S. State Department to include our liberation organisation in the highly controversial list of so-called world terrorist movements.

It is indeed regrettable that the American nation, which secured its own independence after a violent struggle for self-determination, and has ever since championed the cause of human freedom, has chosen to characterise and discredit the legitimate struggle of the Tamil people seeking to determine their political status, as a phenomenon of terrorism. We consider this indictment by the U.S. State Department unfair, unfounded and irresponsible.

We wish to state that the U.S. decision to malign the Tamil freedom movement as a form of terrorism has far-reaching consequences in that it will encourage the racist Sinhala state to pursue its policy of war and military repression against the Tamils and thereby escalate the present armed conflict. This rather imprudent diplomatic move to placate Sri Lanka, which has a notorious record of human rights violations, will not in any way help the prospects of peace and reconciliation, but rather will contribute to the genocidal destruction of the Tamil nation.

It will amount to a serious miscalculation on the part of the U.S. administration if this prohibitionary measure is designed to stifle the growing international support of the world Tamil community to the Eelam liberation struggle spearheaded by the LTTE. The world Tamil community has an unshakeable conviction in the legitimacy of our struggle and in the passionate yearning of our people for freedom from Sinhala domination and oppression. Therefore, we are confident that the attempt by the U.S. Government to tarnish the image of our movement will not in any way affect the popular support and sympathy we enjoy among the world's Tamils.

Political Committee,
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

(English translation of the LTTE statement released by LTTE International Secretariat, 211 Katherine Road, London E6 1BU, United Kingdom. Tel:0181- 503 4294)

THE DEVOLUTION PROPOSALS A GAME OF DECEPTION

Surendra Ajit Rupasinghe

General Secretary

Ceylon Communist Party (Maoist)

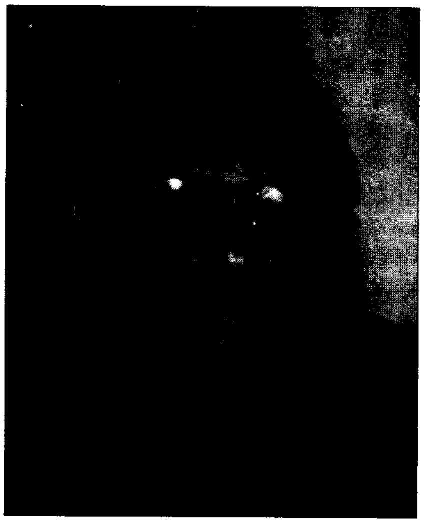
The devolution package is meant to establish peace in the country and lay a basis for resolving the civil conflict in the North-East on a sustainable basis. It is argued by its proponents that the devolution package and the constitution reform process centred around it is the only way to achieve this objective. With the future of this country at stake, we would do well to analyse and evaluate this proposition in an objective and scientific manner.

The government has explicitly stated that, in the end, they must negotiate with the LTTE in order to end the war and resolve the civil conflict, In this case our specific task is to evaluate whether the devolution package will indeed lay the basis for ending the war and resolving the civil conflict through a negotiated settlement with the LTTE on an honourable and sustainable basis.

Unless and until we confront this question we cannot come to a conscious, consistent and responsible political stand or orientation with regard to the major political issues in Sri Lanka. This question has become a line of demarcation between aprincipled democratic progressive line as against all forms of political chicanery, reaction, and chauvinism.

In order to approach the problem we shall raise a central question; What is to be negotiated with the LTTE and who shall determine this? These are the two axes on which the success of any negotiation will rest.

If we understand that the civil conflict has arisen due precisely to the fact that the Tamil people felt alienated from the state given the historic grievances committed by the state and that this is the basis for the development of the Tamil national liberation struggle, then we must agree that it is the representatives of this struggle that must determine the agenda, The essence of the negotiation means that the state must accommodate the demands made by the oppressed since the negotiation is meant to be a means of reconciliation to be achieved by redressing these injustices and grievances caused by it to the Tamil people.



This is what a democratic negotiation is all about. This is not only an elementary moral principle but the fundamental premise for the success of any negotiation. If a wife had sued for a divorce from her husband due to the intolerable abuse and oppression meted out to her by her husband and we wished to reconcile this conflict, we would insist that the wife has the primary right to present her case and to insist upon institutionalising the trust that the husband would no longer do the same to her, but instead would honour her with genuine equality and dignity. Only then would the wife even think of reconciliation and only then would there be a genuine and lasting reconcilition

If the husband insists on establishing the terms and limits of the wife's identity, equality and dignity unilaterally, then the woman would rather seek the divorce since she went into the divorce precisely due to the need to liberate herself from the patriarchal hegemony and domination exercised by the husband.

The most elementary norms of civic justice demand that the terms and mediation moralities for negotiating a reconciliation would be determined by the aggrieved party and not the aggressor.

In fact, to deny the oppressed party the right to determine what is to be negotiated means precisely to deny the fundamental right of self-determination.the denial of which had led to the parting of ways in the first place.

No self-respecting liberation movement will willingly agree to surrender or capitulate on this supreme demand for which it has shed its blood. To expect otherwise is simply arrogant and stupid and would be an extension of the very same psychology of domination that generated the conflict.

In this light, we have to ask whether the devolution package has served to confer parity of esteem to the LTTE. Has it served to establish equality dignity and trust or has it served to marginalise, isolate, alienate and degrade the LTTE?

How can it, when it serves as the political/constitutional basis for implementing the military strategy of annihilating the LTTE'? Has the so-called war for peace, which the package underwrites, brought us closer to an honourable and sustainable peace or has it served to alienate and polarise the relations between and among all the communities in Sri Lanka as never before? Has not the politics of the devolution package which has been to provide the underwriting for the war for peace rained the most destructive violence and caused the deepest agony to the Tamil people? How then can it possibly be a democratic basis to negotiate an honourable and lasting peace?

Viewed in this context, the devolution package, both in process and content constitutes yet another gross violation of the right of self-determination of the Tamil people It is an expression of the very same unilateralist. hegemonist approach that had characterised all previous attempts that had crashed upon the rapids. Nothing is new, only the same old chauvinist polities dressed up in new constitutional embroidery in order to preserve a besieged and bankrupt government by deceiving the masses and to keep the sinking capitalist boat afloat amidst a stormy sea.

By presenting the devolution package, the state has unilaterally determined the terms and limits of what is to be negotiated-the bottom line- while deliberately and wilfully isolating the LTTE from the process. More than that, it has isolated the Tamil people from the process of designing their status and future, given the fact that the millions of Tamils languishing in make-shift refugee camps and living in utter disarray and misery have not even heard of, let alone give a willing consent to these devolution proposals. What a perverse way to give recognition to the democratic rights of an oppressed people !

Furthermore, adding insult to injury, the devolution package enshrines the very same centralist, hegemonist, theocratic principles which had generated this cruel oppression and the civil conflict.

In a most surreptitious manner, the centre has preserved the supreme right to arbitrarily dissolve the unit of devolution, dealing a death blow to the democratic essence of the right of self-determination. Most insidiously, the dominance of the majority over the minorities has been instituted on an altogether new level by the poposed appointment of the Supreme Sangha Council, while linguistic jugglery has ensured the primacy of the Sinhala language over Tamil, Judging by the recent rabid antics of some of the leading monks who swore vengeance against any form of devolution, the appointment of such a council bears doom for any prospect of democratisation of the Sri Lankan state.

In terms of both political process and constitutional content, the devolution package and the constitutional reform process constitutes a basic violation of the democratic right of self-determination of the Tamil people. How then can it possibly be a basis for negotiating an honourable and sustainable peace?

The devolution package will not yield an honourable and sustainable peace. In design and intent and in process and content, it is an instrument for a *conquerors* peace conceived within the politics of domination and subjugation. Is such a peace possible or desirable? Will it simply establish a temporary and unstable truce paving the way for even more disillusionment and even more violent and destructive civil war.

It is most unlikely that the LTTE with its characteristic intransigent determination, with its singular loyalty to the principles established at Thimpu and the Vaddukottai mandate and having suffered incalculable pain and sacrifice, would willingly agree to these degrading terms of domination and subjugation. Have we not sufficient historical experience to establish this fact?

International experience has demonstrated that the success of a negotiated political settlement rests upon the principle of parity of status and the establishment of a mutually agreed Upon framework of principles, parameters, mechanisms and processes. The positive experience in negotiating a settlement in South Africa, Philippines and between the British government and Sein Fein, forcefully brings out the. lesson

The recent banning of the LTTE as a terrorist organisation by the US is not only a display of gross hypocrisy given its actions across the globe, it promotes the agenda of a conquerors peace-which will never bring about a honourable and sustainable peace.

So then, what is this devolution package about? Whose interests is it meant to serve

All that the devolution package has served is to provide a moral justification and political legitimacy to the state to wage a war of truly genocidal intensity and proportion, if not against, then certainly victimising the entire Tamil population in the North-East. It has served the government to present a democratic facade aimed at mobilising the masses behind a policy of state terror directed against the Tamil people and to impose a regime of terror throughout the country in order to divert attention and suppress all legitimate protest over the fact of having completely reneged on all its election pledges to the people

The LTTE broke off the last round of negotiations due to its perception that the government was setting a deadly trap to ensnare and destroy it with the aid of India, After two extended ultimatums the LTTE announced that it would have to take a most painful decision to withdraw from the negotiations, In order to get the strategic advantage it then blasted two military targets

At this point, the government could have retaliated militarily and also made an honest self-evaluation as to why the negotiations bloke down. At least it could have engaged in some dialogue and public debate to discover the real reasons for the breakdown and taken steps to address its own weaknesses and mistakes and also encouraging the LTTE do so, While retaliating militarily, the government could have engaged in a dialogue with the LTfi so as to learn the lessons and so articulate a more professionalised negotiational structure. This is what a democratic government would have done.

Instead, the government chose to go for all out war to liquidate the LTTE and even went to the extent of occupying Jaffna in the true spirit of a conqueror

Why? We can only conclude that it did so in order to satisfy the demands of foreign powers on which it is so completely dependent and to maintain some popularity among its social base by whipping up chauvinist sentiments due to the fact that it stood naked in terms of reneging on all its hallowed election pledges to the people

A conquerors peace will never produce an honour able and sustainable peace Such a peace is only possible by resuming negotiations with the LTTE by establishing parity of status and a mutually agreed upon framework as discussed, The politics of the devolution package objectively negates these conditions. It can only establish a temporary truce, while laying the basis for even more violent destructive war In which case, it will, in the parlance o f the recent political debate, find its due place in the dust bin of history.

What's going on in Jaffna

Bank sitting on millions of unclaimed rupees

By Rahul Sharma

JAFFNA, Sri Lanka, Oct 20 (Reuters) - Banks in Sri Lanka's former Tamil Tiger rebel stronghold of Jaffna are sitting on thousands of accounts holding millions of rupees whose owners have yet to return to claim their money. Hundreds of thousands of people left the northern Jaffna peninsula towards the end of 1995 just before the Sri Lankan army captured Jaffna town, ruled for several years by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Military officials in the area said more than 450,000 people later returned to the peninsula after months in the rebel-held jungles of the Wanni region, on the Sri Lankan mainland, driven home by hunger and disease. But the chief manager of Jaffna's biggest bank branch, the state-owned Bank of Ceylon, said only 50 percent of his 26,000 customers' accounts were active. "The rest of the accounts are either defunct or people are out of the region," V. Thillainathan told Reuters. Thillainathan said the Bank of Ceylon had eight branches in the district with a combined deposit base of 35 billion rupees ($583 million) and more than 55 percent of total banking business. The three other banks in Jaffna are the state-owned People's Bank, Hatton National Bank and Commercial Bank. Officials of these banks were not available for comment. Thillainathan said banking activities were gradually returning to normal in the peninsula, which even today is not accessible by road from the mainland. "During the LTTE period, we cut down on certain types of businesses like dealing in foreign exchange, which we completely stopped," Thillainathan said. "But remittances, transfers and domestic banking continued as usual." In the years when the LTTE ruled Jaffna town and surrounding areas, cash for the banks was taken by Red Cross ships, the only mode of transportation acceptable to both the Sri Lankan government and the rebels.

The LTTE had plans to introduce their own currency but it never materialised and the Sri Lankan rupee remained in circulation. "During the LTTE years there was a big drop in lending. We restricted it as we did not want the money to go to the wrong hands and be used for something else," said Thillainathan.

Thillainathan said there had been a big drop in foreign remittances since the exodus as most people were living outside Jaffna. "Some people who received money have moved to Colombo. There is still a lot in the Wanni," he said. The former rebel stronghold attracted huge amounts in foreign remittances from the huge diaspora of Sri Lankan Tamils settled in Australia, Canada, Britain and France, among other countries.

"Our international business has dropped from five million rupees a day to less than a million a day," Thillainathan said, adding that only 3,000-4,000 people were still receiving money from overseas. Thillainathan said people were opening new accounts. "People here are savings oriented. They like to save. It's a typical local trait," he said. But he added that lending was still poor and restricted to facilities for self-employed or small businessmen who were settling down after months of displacement. "Circumstances are not good for big lending. Nobody wants to invest here because of the uncertainty," Thillainathan said. He said the Bank of Ceylon was planning to computerise the Jaffna branch and relaunch its range of credit cards once communication systems improved with the launch of new telephone exchanges and an improvement in the power supply.

"We had a computerisation plan in 1990. But the computers and credit cards could not work because communications did not work," he said.

Colombo blast damage - more than $5 million

The bombs that ripped through buildings in Colombo's downtown on October 15 caused more than $5 million in damages, news reports said.

The blasts and the subsequent gun battle with security forces left 18 people dead and 105 injured.

Much of the damage was borne by the 39-storey World Trade Centre, apparently the target of the bombers. Insurance companies put preliminary estimates of the damage to the building at $5-7 million, according to Hussain Cassim, director of the building, the tallest structure in the country.

The $130 million building has a $3 million terrorism cover with a local insurance company, which has reinsured with Lloyds of London, Cassim said.

Damage to the neighbouring 32-storeyed Bank of Ceylon building were estimated at $1.7 million, The Times newspaper reported quoting unnamed bank officials.

Both buildings were repaired only a few months back after a similar attack on the nearby Central Bank in January 1996 that killed 90 people, wounded 1,400 and destroyed many buildings.

Officials at the Hilton and Galadari hotels, which were severely damaged by the blast, have not yet estimated the cost. But Graham Hatch, Galadari's general manager, said it would be a year before they reopened.

Bomb lorry faced no barriers

In a shocking indictment on security in Colombo city, a Military-Police committee has revealed that the truck which carried some 400 kg of explosives to blast the WTC Twin Towers and other buildings last Wednesday did not face even a single security check- point on its journey through several roads.

The committee headed by Major General Jaliya Nammuni and comprising top police and military officers in a report handed over to President Kumaratunga has said that even one checkpoint might have prevented this major disaster in which 18 people were killed, more than a 100 injured and property worth millions destroyed.

According to latest investigations the bomb truck believed to have been loaded on a side street in Pettah, proceeded through Maradana and then turned to the Lake House roundabout and into the city's tightest security zone from one of two main approach roads.

The top level probe team appointed by the govt. in the aftermath of the disaster said police had claimed there were checkpoints in key parts of the city but the committee saw no evidence of any checkpoints being operative on that fateful day.

It said regulations were supposed to be in force to restrict the entry of lorries and other heavy vehicles to the city. But it seemed these regulations were not being enforced consistently.

Defence Secretary Chandrananda de Silva, in an interview with our sister paper The Sunday Times, strongly denied any security lapse last Wednesday, but the committee and deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte have since acknowledged that something had been amiss in security.

JVP opposes package

The Peoples Liberation Front (JVP) has rejected the government's ethnic peace plan and joined the influential Buddhist clergy in warning that it could lead to further bloodshed.

The People's Liberation Front (JVP), which has led two failed insurrections in the country in the past 26 years, told reporters it totally opposed the power-sharing arrangements.

JVP general secretary Tilvin de Silva said constitutional reforms which would turn the country into a de facto federal state would lead to its division on ethnic lines and trigger inter-communal violence.

The JVP had opposed a similar devolution plan in 1987 but took part in a Parliamentary Select Committee which studied the reform plan first unveiled by President Chandrika Kumaratunga in August 1995.

The select committee ended its first round of talks with the main opposition, which holds the balance of power, shooting down the plan.

The JVP led a failed insurrection in 1971 and again between 1988 and 1990.

The influential Buddhist clergy has also opposed the political reform plan.

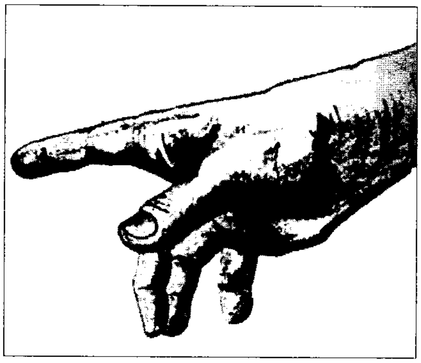
It says it supports the idea of devolution on geographic and economic considerations but not on ethnic lines.

Unsupportive Tamils: Analysing their mind-sets

I recently read M. Thirunavukkarasu's Broken Promises (1997. ISBN: I 901926 801) Readers should not be misled by the title: it is not a sad tale about lovers' vows made and broken, but an even more tragic story (history) of promises cynically made to an entire people, and callously broken. "At every important juncture and at every decisive moment, the Sinhala leaders have been very lavish in giving promises to the Tamils; but when the crisis has passed, they have failed to keep their pledges" (page 1). The author traces promises broken by successive leaders, beginning with Mr D S Senanayake, the first Prime Minister of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon), through Mr S W R D Bandaranaike (father of the present President, murdered by a Buddhist monk), to Dudley Senanayake, J R Jayawardena and so to the present President, elected largely because she promised peace. (Evidently, she meant the peace of death.)

It has been said that fools learn from experience; the wise, from the experience of others, but it seems there are some Tamils so foolish as to be incapable of learning even from past mistakes: they continue to be assuaged and beguiled by false promises; they refuse to learn from the repeated lessons of history. How else can one account for the incredible credulity of those Tamils who believe in the declared good intentions of the present government? Do they really think that if the Tigers disarm or are defeated on the battlefield, the Buddhist monks and Sinhalese politicians will grant us what they term "concessions", and we see as the basic "rights" of all peoples and nations?

Why should they, then? **No nation, no people were given rights through altruism, or kindness of heart. Rights were granted either because there was no other choice or because continuing to deny them had become too "costly" (and not only in the financial sense). In short, a group is "granted" rights only when it has taken them. This is harsh and saddening but a fact demonstrated over and over in human history. Slave-owners did not undergo an abrupt change of heart, nor did tyrannical rulers suddenly develop a conscience and a tender heart.** The assertion by the government that peace talks can be held only after the Tigers are defeated (and the Tamils left defenceless) is a lie and a trick. It is the old "Carrot and stick" tactic: the painful stick of war, and the promise of carrots which, in this case, will not be kept. Peace talks should be between equal forces, and not dictated from a position of strength, victors to vanquished, on a "take it or leave it" basis.



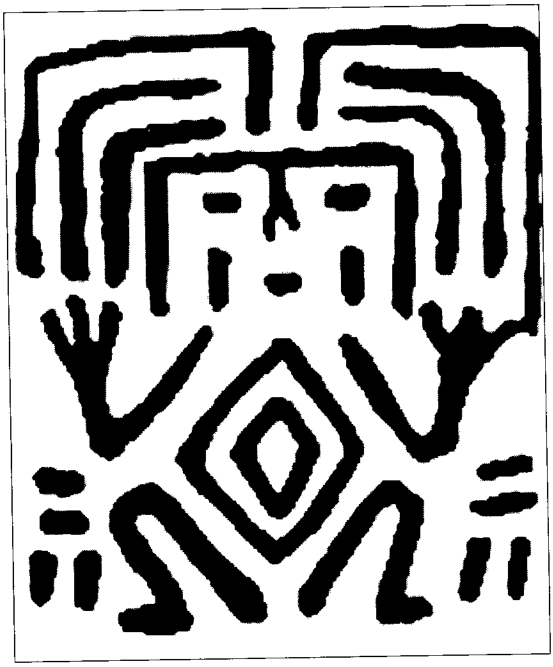
C.S

So how does one begin to understand the mind-set of those Tamils abroad or outside the North-East province who are impatient with an armed struggle waged at the cost of immense suffering, and death? *(After all, as the Bible says, there is no greater expression of love than the willingness to lay down one's life for others. The Bible also says that "charity" in the earlier meaning of loving kindness - should begin with those at home, and here I take "home" to be the place where our roots lie - whether we like it or not, in the island now known as Sri Lanka.)* There are several possible explanations to account for Tamil indifference or denial of support, and I will take up but a few.

However, before I proceed any further, let me clarify that when I say "Sinhalese" in this article, it will almost invariably be a shortened, more convenient form of saying "those Sinhalese who are intolerant and racist", and when I say "Buddhist", I mean those who, in the name of the most gentle of philosophies (it was preached as a way of life, not as a religion), unleash intense hatred and brutality. I make this clarification not only because we, in fighting racism, must guard against becoming racists ourselves Paulo Frere cautions in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, that the oppressed must not become like the oppressors) but also because some of the most decent, affectionate and loyal friends I have had the happiness of having were Sinhalese, and the most remarkable person I have ever known was one who never talked about his faith, but was one who in his simple life and daily actions exemplified the best of Buddhism. This heightens for me the tragedy which has befallen the Island, metamorphosising it from the multiracial, multicultural Ceylon I knew, into the ugly Sri Lanka we have today, a place of hate, destruction and sorrow.

Let us leave aside the naive Tamils who believe or who, for various reasons, want to believe the verbal protestations of the present Sinhalese-Buddhist government, and turn to other categories. Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher, in his Meditations asked himself how we should judge the worth of an individual and concluded, by the things to which that person gives worth - that is, importance and/or great interest. Most of us give worth to wealth and material possessions, for they purchase comfort and security, social respect and status; they attract the envy of our relations and friends (which we find most enjoyable); they testify to our "success" in life and inflate our ego. Others attach worth (be it assessed in terms of time, thought, energy, subject of conversation, and so on) to social gatherings, to entertainment, fashion, sports, gossip etc. Such individuals and families are indifferent to the plight of their people in the Island which, though attractive to Western tourists searching for tropical exotica; for sun, sea and sex, is an island of suffering and fear for Tamils. *(Sri Lanka - though vociferously claiming to be the place where Buddhism is preserved in its purest form - is now notorious not only for its violence and corruption, but also as a "paradise isle" for paedophiles preying on little girls and boys)*. It is not that social gatherings, participation or interest in sports, and other recreational pastimes do not have a positive role in life (partly through "recreation", we "re-create" ourselves) but what priority do we give them? How much of our time, thought and energy? Is it at the cost of neglecting other, more important and less self-centered matters? Going back to Marcus Aurelius, unfortunately some of us value things which are not of real value. Besides, daily life has its routine, its problems and preoccupations; energy is consumed, time passes, and the hapless Tamils in the North and East fade into the background, are abandoned to their sorrows and hardship.

If you don't see it on the TVscreen it didn't happen !



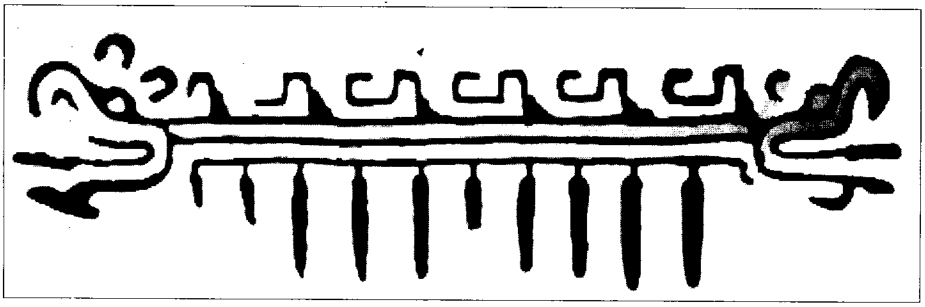
Whether one works in a government office or in the private sector, it is not easy to effect change in thinking and behaviour. Most of us have experienced this inertia, and why should it be different in the political realm? And so some are left trying to knead the indifferent into consciousness, concern and action; to rouse them from their comfortable routine and phlegm. This indifference is solidified by the Sinhalese government barring free access to the international press, and to relief organisations, all in the name of "security". (The Sinhalese armed forces need the "security" of censorship and news blackout in order to go on damaging and destroying the souls and bodies - not to mention the houses, the fields and livelihood of the Tamils - with impunity.) **In an age where many in the West and elsewhere rely not on the printed word but on what they see on television, the absence of images on the screen simply means that the world is unaware. Something happens, but if it is not reported, then, to the outside world, it has not happened at all: it is as simple, true and terrible as that.** To me, the root of the word "information" is "form": the information we are provided with, forms our thinking and reactions, creates our opinions and beliefs and, to that extent, makes us what we are. News about the Tamils - a small nation on a comparatively insignificant island - is easily blocked and the world is largely unaware (worse, mis-informed) about our past, our present plight and the grim struggle to fashion a better life for future generations. Lacking information and understanding, there is a lack of concern.

Then there are those who do not comprehend what all the "fuss" is about. A friend living in Canada is reported to have asked, with a perplexity tinged with exasperation, "But why are they continuing to create trouble like this?" Some are ignorant because they are poor, or are unable to read, or because daily life gives them neither the rest nor the opportunity to properly inform themselves. (I mean members of the working-class and the poor.) ignorance caused by such factors is to be sympathised with and, where possible, alleviated, but when it manifests itself in people like the person cited above, it must be seen as nothing less than sinful and criminal, because it can be rectified with comparative ease; because their condition of ignorance is self-induced, is voluntary. Such Tamils, having asked questions, are too lazy or too uninterested to take the trouble to read what the other side has published and made available. (I say, "the other side" because they do not ask, "Why are we doing this?" thus, even in their incomprehension or disagreement, identifying themselves with their people). **They don't try to make contact, ask questions and reach an answer, whatever that may be. The superficially interested ask casually; their**

questions do not indicate a serious wish to know and, in the final analysis, are not questions at all.

The easy way to salve your conscience and be happy

An explanation for the behaviour of some other Tamils could derive from subconscious thought processes, proceeding somewhat on the following lines: "I do not want to be bothered; I am interested above all in my, and my own family's success, recreational activities, fun and happiness." But the confession and conclusion would leave the person uneasy, for s/he would then have to see herself/himself as selfish - a perception which would create feelings of guilt, and damage one's self-image. In such a situation, if the individuals concerned could convince themselves that Tamil militants are either stupid, insanely violent or both, then they are set free to cheerfully go their selfish way. Not only will their conscience be clear and at ease, but their indifference, far from being a lack, a negative indicator of character and worth, would become a sign of intelligence, morality and even spirituality. Rather than feeling uneasy, perhaps ashamed, one feels superior! This, I repeat, would be a sub-conscious process - and a very effective psychological strategy at that because, before living with others, we first have to live, and be at peace, with ourselves. Of course, as with all peoples, there are Tamils so brazen and selfish as not to be troubled at all by an uneasy conscience, by memories of their past life, and that of their parents and relations, by the links which, though denied, remain.



Another category is more blatant, and here I quote - comment is unnecessary - from a letter written by a friend:- There are Tamils abroad who think we should give up the fight and go back to being a good and docile little minority. **Their wish is to be able to stay with relations and friends, bask on Sri Lankan beaches, holiday in Kandy and Nuwara Eliya, and generally have what is described as a great time. They could throw their money about in the holiday resorts of Sinhalese Sri Lanka - particularly now that the exchange rate is so favourable - and will be like Maharajahs, what with their money, foreign clothes and accents. They would be tourists in what was once their, or their parent's, country.** They would have a wonderful holiday and suffer nothing of the horrors and hardship their people in the North and East daily experience and endure. "But here are the militants, crudely spoiling it all for us. How very bad and uncivilised of them! We are angry and disgusted; won't have anything to do with them; won't help, don't even want to hear about the troubles. Boring stuff. Serves them right! We'll have to go somewhere else on holiday. Anything interesting on television tonight?" Angry with the militants, they uncharitably turn their face away from the people as a whole.

Then there are the religious-minded Tamils (Hindu and Christian), and while one understands their anti-violence stance, they must accept that the days when divinity manifested itself visually and/or audibly, and intervened directly in human affairs are long past. Divine intervention in history (if it now occurs at all) is through human agency, and so, having prayed, one must get up and be active, for example, by contributing towards the rehabilitation of damaged Tamil lives and homes - if not in thousands of pounds, then in hundreds; if not in hundreds, then even in tens of pounds, for every little, however little, helps. This is but one, non-violent way of helping the ordinary Tamil people of the East and North.

If we wanted to survive as a people pacifism won't do

Finally, there are those who are against violence on humane, ethical grounds. Their attitude should not be dismissed as being merely an aesthetic distaste, the turning away of cultivated, fastidious ladies and gentlemen. Often such Tamils are sensitive and thoughtful people whose abhorrence of violence is based on compassion and deeply held principles. Nor should this stance be seen as a phenomenon peculiar to the Tamils: to cite one instance, during World War II, though England was fighting for her very survival, there were English men and women who were pacifists, and paid the price for it. That too was an expression of courage, and yet they were misguided, for if many had adopted the same posture, the world would have suffered for a while under the evil and terror of a triumphant fascism. (I say "for a while" because dictators and dictatorships are not indefinite. In time, and in their turn, they pass away. True, the French Revolution led to the Reign of Terror, to Napoleon's dictatorship, and to the return of the monarchy. But though it appeared that the Revolution had failed, had been betrayed and perverted, things were never the same again, and finally the French did get -

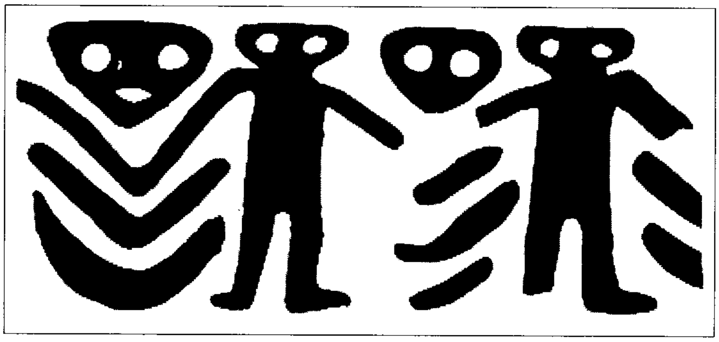
and now have - the freedom for which the earlier generation struggled.) And if Hitler subjected European nations to domination and cruelty, how would Asians and Africans have fared under Nazism? This brings me back to the Tamils: we were pacifists until repeated violence visited upon defenceless civilians convinced us that, if we wanted to survive as a people, if we wanted to live in freedom and dignity, then there was no option but to struggle for Eelam.

Gandhi style satyagraha, patient protest against discrimination and injustice, nonviolent demonstrations, recourse to those means available within a parliamentary democracy, were met with crude and increasing violence. Since it seems that "memory dies" all too quickly in some Tamils, we must remind ourselves again and again that from the 1950s onwards, the Sinhalese government during race riots, deliberately delayed the re-imposition of "law and order" so that the mobs could first terrorise the Tamils, "teach them a good lesson", frighten them into acquiescence and acceptance of their subordinate status. Later, the government, the armed forces and the police actively connived at, and participated in these race riots, culminating in the massacre of 1983 when the names and addresses of Tamils, derived from official records (e.g., voters' lists) were made available to, and transport provided for, those who raped and torched Tamils alive; those who robbed, and then burnt or destroyed what could not be transported. It was an ugly and horrendous pogrom - not a riot- planned, organised, incited and facilitated by those holding the highest positions in the political and religious hierarchies. It was also an act of despicable cowardice, because the mobs fell upon helpless women, children and men - they did not march to confront the Tamil freedom fighters. (Guards at the central Colombo prison released Sinhalese inmates and enabled them to murder Tamil political prisoners held in the same jail.) **And yet some of the very Tamils who either left the Island because of discrimination, riots and pogrom or who changed their minds and decided not to return from abroad but settle elsewhere permanently, are now indifferent to the plight of those left behind!** Nor should they have the comforting illusion that Tamil suffering ceased with 1983: there is constant bombing and shelling and, in the occupied territories, brutality and destruction.

Tamil militancy is the creation of Sinhalese racism and hegemonic drives, and must be seen as the expression of a people who, left with no other choice, finally resorted to armed struggle - soberly, fully conscious of the hardships which lay ahead - in order to defend the till then defenceless Tamil people, to cease being forever passive victims and to win the legitimate rights of the Tamils. Like the Jews after centuries of persecution at European (not, it must be emphasised, Arab) hands opting for a home of their own, the Tamils were made to realise that they would be safe and would lead lives of dignity only within their borders, only inside the safety of a Tamil Eelam. (Unfortunately, the Palestinians are now paying the price for past European crimes and cruelties against the Jews, but that is another story.) Before independence (1948) and in the decades immediately following, our Tamil leaders did not demand separation; then, forced by events, they asked for a mild form of federalism; finally, in the face of continued discrimination in all spheres, and with increasing violence, the Tamils saw a separate state as the only answer. Who then carries responsibility? **Here we have a people driven to violence, and then accused of being violent; history is forgotten, cause and consequence overlooked. It is bitter irony indeed that victims are seen as villains; that those on whom successive waves of terror were unleashed, are now branded as terrorists. The Tamils have not invaded Sinhalese territory, they are not occupying Kandy as the Sinhalese army now occupies Jaffna, a place beloved by many Tamils. All we ask is to be left in peace within our homeland, to be allowed to go our own way. Is that too much?** Why try, through the use of superior numbers and modern weaponry, to force the Tamil people to stay (subservient and insecure) within unitary structures? In language, culture and territory, there were two nations in Ceylon: now, thanks to Sinhalese-Buddhist actions, in feelings too. As it was said at another time and of another people, "Let (our) people go!"

Should the militants give up and disarm (the opinion of some Tamils) what will follow? I return to the first two paragraphs of this article: the weak, the unarmed, will not be given "concessions" (in itself, a word of condescension and insult). in Book 4 of his work, The Histories, Herodotus describes a slave uprising where the erstwhile masters first fought, unsuccessfully, with swords. Then, one of them suggested they drop their weapons and take up the whip, symbol of their past power: if the enemy accepts, deep within themselves, their earlier slave-status, they will surrender. The strategm worked, but the analogy is not accurate here because the Tamils were never slaves. However, the Tamil was for long associated with timidity and a cowardly (rather than a Stoic) acceptance: it was the Sinhalese who were seen as splendidly brave and quickly violent. **The Tamil militants have changed all that, have forced the Sinhalese to see us a people to be taken seriously, and dealt with on terms of equality and justice. Should the armed struggle be given up before the goal for which so much has already been sacrificed by so many, what will become of the Tamil people?** One need not be a prophet to perceive and predict a return to discrimination and subordination; to the deprivation of rights and opportunities; to insult and mockery; to bullying, rape and assault. Make no mistake, have no illusions: our history since independence tells us that the victors will be arrogant and harsh in their triumph, led by racists and religious fanatics. There are Sinhalese who would live in amity, side by side, with the Tamils, but a climate of virulent anti-Tamil feeling has been created, and many Sinhalese are now proud of their racism, seeing it as an expression of nationalism. Fair-minded Sinhalese will be branded as "traitors", "coward's", "Tamil-lovers" (equivalent of "nigger lover") and pushed aside - as they were in the past. Policy and practice will be dictated by the most venomously racist and by fundamentalist Buddhist monks. (Having found a permanent solution to "the Tamil problem", these will turn on the Muslims and; finally, on the Sinhalese Christians, making Sri Lanka a "Sinhalese Buddhists only" island.) This is the reality which confronts us, but the Tamil struggle will be defeated only if the Tamils outside Eelam are non-supportive, and we, the Tamils outside Eelam, carry a heavy historical burden. Our support is of vital importance and urgency, now as never before. This support can take many forms, moral, material, the awakening of awareness in others etc, to mention but a few avenues. Those who really wish to, will find a way.

Some Tamils fear that the means (of violence) will become the end. In other words, that the Tamil people will merely exchange Sinhalese terror for Tiger tyranny; that there will be no democracy in Eelam, no freedom but a Stalinist or Pol Pot dictatorship. But the Tamils who fought with courage and sacrifice such as the world has rarely witnessed, will not allow themselves to be tyrannised by anyone, whether foreign or native. In the long run, freedom, and the dignity which goes with it, will be won - and what is more, will be kept ! We must have confidence in our people - they have proved, and have earned, it.



Tamils who live outside Eelam (like myself in London) cannot, and did not, decide that the struggle should continue. We do not have the right because our bodies, our children, homes, livelihood are not in danger. We have no moral right to sit in comfort and safety, and make that terrible choice for others. (Tamils living outside Eelam but within Sinhalese Sri Lanka have a greater right than we who have had the good fortune to escape to green, and not so green, pastures.) Thousands of lives have been lost; thousands more permanently maimed, physically and psychologically; whole generations are growing up without proper schooling, without any peace or beauty in their lives. **As my mother (now dead several years) quietly observed, young Tamils are dying even before living, so that other Tamils can live a better life. We who have escaped from a paradise turned into hell do not have the right to decide.** But our fellow Tamils (however distant, they are our sons and daughters, our grandsons and grand-daughters, our brothers and sisters, our nephews and nieces) have concluded that pleading; appeals to reason, decency and justice have been repeatedly tried, and have met with broken promises, contempt and violence, and that true peace will now be realised only through separation. Accordingly, they have opted for a war of decolonisation and liberation; for the wounds, pain and death war brings them - as Frantz Fanon showed, decolonisation is a violent and unsettling process. The Tamils back home have decided, and are courageously paying the price. In such a case, do we have the choice not to help them in whatever way we can, however modest that may be? I repeat: help can be for reconstruction and rehabilitation work; it can take the form of pressurising the Sinhalese to stop bombing civilian areas, to stop destroying homes and fields, to allow in supplies of food and medicine, to stop the sexual assault of women and girls - a brutal and despicable method used throughout time by foreign armies attempting to degrade and terrorise. (The word "terrorise" leads me to "terrorists": to Tamils in Sri Lanka, particularly to the civilians in the occupied North and East, members of the Sinhalese armed forces are undoubtedly the " terrorists".) if there really is the wish and the will, ways will be found of assisting, be it however small. **Even from a selfish perspective, we must help: can we live with dignity abroad if our people at home are reduced to servility? We may be geographically and physically apart, but don't we remain a part?**

Finally, victory will be followed by a genuine peace - not the unhappy, temporary peace of defeat and subjugation - and true peace being indivisible, its blessings and benefits will be enjoyed both by Tamils, and by our fellow Sinhalese. ❑

Preserving "territorial integrity" through near-genocidal wars !

"The state structures with which the peoples of South Asia are lumbered with today evolved in service to colonialism. The present geo-political boundaries and state structures do not reflect the histories or needs of the many peoples and nations in South Asia. The Sri Lankan, Indian and Pakistani governments place the "territorial integrity" of their nation states on such high pedestals that they are willing to wage near genocidal wars to maintain them", says a statement issued by the **Committee for the Commemmoration of 50 Years of Resistance in South Asia.**

The statement by the Committee further says:

"In order to crush the aspirations of oppressed nations and peoples and maintain the interests of the ruling elites and imperialism, the governments of all these countries (South Asian) are prepared to go to any limits. Each year, in these countries, as a whole, tens of thousands of people are killed by state repression, which has been unleashed to crush nationalist as well as popular movements...

"Fifty years ago the peoples of South Asia believed that the new dawn of independence would bring with it a better future; a future of peace, progress and prosperity. An era in which people's aspirations and needs would be catered for. The reality today is that South Asia is the home to some of the world's worst poverty, political repression, corruption and rule for the rulers

In India, conflicts caused by groups fighting for national liberation began on the first day of its birth, with uprisings in Nagaland, blood spilling in the Punjab and war in Kashmir. Each of these conflicts continues to the present day and exposes the false premise that India is an ancient and single nation. Turning to Pakistan, the ruling classes, still cling to the belief that the country exists because of the 'Two Natlon Theory', in which Hindus and Muslims are projected as two separate nations. The independence of Bangladesh and the fact that more Muslims live in India than in Pakistan is conveniently ignored. Old Pakistan proved conclusively that religion is not a basis for nationhood. **In reality, prior to 1947 neither India, Pakistan or Sri Lanka existed. What did exist was the British Raj a mish-mash of kingdoms, colonial states and regional administrations, that were thrown together in accordance with the needs and requirements of the British colonials.**

A rally has been arranged by the Committee on 8th November at 1.00 p.m. at Birchfields Community Centre, Brighton Grove/Danes Road, off Wilmslow Road, Manchester in this connection. ***Bernard Indiran*** *of the Tamil Eelam Solidarity Network speaks on the Enslavement of the Tamils, while* ***Ummai Selvanathan*** *of the Tamil Women's Freedom Movement speaks on Women's Position in the Struggle for Tamil Eelam. Other speakers will be addressing on the Kashmir and Punjab questions as well as on several liberation struggles in India.*

The Sri Lankan situation is closely tied to the Tamil question. In spite of the repeated protests of the Tamils. the Bntish hanpily left the Tamil people under a Singhalese dominated state. Independence of Ceylon in 1948 did not mean freedom for all the peoples of the Island. For the Tamils it meant a new era of enslavement, and they have been fighting for their freedom ever since.

The last 50 years have demonstrated that the national question - both with the major nation states as well as those struggling for nationhood - is one of the most important issues facing South Asia. We need a new world to emerge out of this chaos -a world in which state structures reflect the histories, cultures and requirements of the people. This means that each and every nation struggling for self determination - should be given its right to regain its history. At the same time it is essential to strive for an anti-imperialist unity to combat the onslaught of multi-national capital blocs.

Notwithstanding their conflicts or differences, when it comes to crushing popular or nationalist resistance, the ruling classes in South Asia happily work together, whenever it suits their interests. The peoples' resistance movements, however, are vastly divergent, and are often isolated from each other. We hope to start the process which will provide a common platform for struggling peoples of South Asia, so that we can both share our pains as well as work out common ways of struggle against common enemies.

Rajiv Gandhi assassination: CIA & Mossad involved ?

The deposition of some key witnesses pointed the needle of suspicion towards foreign agencies like CIA and Mossad in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, argued the Congress lawyer R.N. Mittal before the one-man panel probing the conspiracy angle of the assassination. The lawyer also told the Jain Commission that former Prime Minister Chandrasekhar and former Union Minister Subramania Swamy had concealed certain vital information.

Anti-LTTE claptrap by a 1-man band

A Press notice issued by the Federation of Associations of Canadian Thamils on October 21 1997 states:-

Our attention has been drawn to a statement issued by a Colombo based organization under the style of " Concerned Human Rights Organization" which appeared in the government controlled and Sinhalese owned newspapers in Colombo. It is claimed that Mr. D.B.S. Jeyaraj " has been receiving anonymous death threats and warnings.." Unfortunately Jeyaraj has a habit of crying wolf when there is none. We are aware of the fact that he himself plants stories about him in The Sunday Island newspaper pretending that it comes from some other source. The Thamil Diaspora is committed to upholding human rights and individual rights including the right to free speech and expression. This is an article of faith, which we scrupulously follow. We categorically deny that any of our members were ever involved in "cryptic calls" or " death threats" against him. For a long time Mr. Jeyaraj has been conducting a one-man crusade against the LTTE in the columns of The Sunday Island newspaper. He has made himself the self-appointed mouthpiece of this newspaper, widely considered the flagship of the ultra Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism. Therefore, there is understandable resentment against Mr. Jeyaraj when he chooses this particular newspaper-to peddle his own vendetta and innuendoes.

To our disappointment we find this correspondent has very little respect for facts or truths. All his stories are laced with a heavy dose of lies and outright fabrications. For example he bent over backwards to say "a Tiger supporters in Toronto were and are attempting to mislead the Thamil public in Canada about the implications of the ruling on Suresh.

> *A self-appointed mouthpiece of a newspaper widely considered the flagship of the ultra sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism*

An exercise in deception is being undertaken to hoodwink unsuspecting Tamils into thinking that the judicial ruling on Suresh describes the LTTE as a terrorist organization. This is a semantic illusion." As a matter of fact it is this correspondent who is indulging " in an exercise of deception" when he omitted the Judge's statement " So all I do say is that I am satisfied that there were reasonable grounds for the Ministers to believe as they did. That does not necessarily mean that what they believe is a fact." The omission to quote the judge's statement is not accidental but deliberate. To do otherwise does not suit this correspondent's own crusade to portray the LTTE as a terrorist organization. Again he purposefully omitted the Judge's remarks " based on the evidence made before me, the Thamil people of Sri Lanka suffer from discrimination, and, based on some of the evidence made before me, may have suffered persecution."

Another favorite topic peddled by this correspondent ad nauseam is his accusation that LTTE supporters are collecting money through extortion. We thought that at least on this one subject he would respect the truth, since he enjoyed the hospitality of the World Thamil Movement (WTM) for almost a year and edited the newspaper " Voice of Tigers." To refute this canard about extortion we like to quote the statement made by Insp. Roy Teefe of the Metropolitan Toronto Police Department which appeared in the Ottawa Citizen dated August 15, 1997. To quote " However the police inspector said he had not heard any incidents in which Thamils were forced to contribute to the separatist war in Sri Lanka. ' We have found that there are families giving money to Thamil Tiger supporters but they are not being extorted'." Surely this statement coming from the Police should nail the canard propagated by this enterprising correspondent whose stock in trade is half-truths and down right lies. He thinks like Dr. Goebbels a lie repeated many times will be believed as truth.

In 1996 the WTM commissioned a Canadian firm called the Smaller World Communications Inc to conduct an independent survey among Thamil Canadians in regard to a number of issues. To the question "Do LTTE activities adversely affect you in Canada?" 77.0% of those surveyed answered No. Another 74% expressed support for an independent Thamil

State. But this corespondent by wave of a hand simply dismissed the pollster as " a bogus company'.

We can cite many more examples to prove that this correspondent is a sick person suffering from hallucinations and nightmares. On August 8, 1997 issue of The Sunday Island Jeyaraj wrote an article titled " Tigers raising money in Toronto being probed." After describing in elaborate detail an incident supposed to have taken place on August 7, 1997 he stated "The ongoing probe has resulted in hundreds of Tamil residences being visited over the past few days. It is very likely that the number would exceed four figures by next week." Now it is almost the end of October, and not a single resident has brought any such probe to our attention. Can Jeyaraj name the "hundreds of residences" raided by the Police? Since he gives the impression of very intimate contact with the local law enforcement officers he should be able to produce the list. Otherwise, we have to conclude he is living in a dream world of his own suffering from LTTE nightmares.

There are about seven weeklies; one bi- monthly and one monthly newspaper published in Toronto and not all of them can be considered pro-LTTE. In fact one of them (a free paper) can be even deemed to be critical of LTTE. But none of them have any problem regarding publication or distribution.

The Muncherie publication folded not because of any threats or boycott, since Mr. Jeyaraj himself claimed increased sale of the newspaper after the "ban by the WTM". In fact he solicited the assistance of the WTM to inform the public not to boycott Muncharie. But the moment the press statement was issued, true to form he wrote " WTM lifts ban on Muncherie" suggesting there was a ban in the first place. Only a perverted mind can stoop to such low-level subterfuges.

As mentioned above, Mr. Jeyaraj has a propensity to lace his stories with half-truths, insinuation, innuendoes, insults and derogatory remarks- the very "sins" he accuses others of committing. For example referring to the editors of a local newspaper he subtly suggested that one of them was an ex- employee in a hair-dressing saloon (insinuating he is from a " low caste") and the other as an ex- tea boutique keeper (insinuating he is "unlettered "). Well this is not surprising since he never fails to refer to the LTTE leader Prabhakaran himself as one hailing from the "fishing caste." Thus Mr. Jeyaraj relishes in insulting others to portray himself as the only super caste journalist, but he cries foul when others repay him with the same coin. The revulsion against him is not denied, but it is a figment of his imagination to claim that LTTE supporters are threatening to harm him. To be honest he has himself to blame for his present woes, if any. As for what appeared in the "Mullakkam" newspaper Mr. Jeyaraj himself has said legal proceedings have been initiated against that newspaper.He should go ahead and do what he thinks right.

While we appreciate the concern of those Sinhalese journalists who have rushed to his defense, may we ask what the "Concerned Human Rights Organizations" did-

(1) About the rape of 18 years old school girl Kirishanthi Kumaraswamy who after being raped was murdered by the army at Kaithady checkpoint on September 7, 1997?

(2) About the murder of Rasamma Kumaraswamy, the mother of Kirishanthi, Piranavan (aged 16) Kirishanthi's brother, and Kirupamoorthy Sithamparam (aged 32) their neighbor by the same army and on the same day?

(3) About Rajani Velauthapillai, aged 23 years was detained by the Sri Lankan army personnel at Kondavil military check-post on her way back from Manippai on October 03, 1996? She was gang raped by the army and her body was dumped in a pit in an abandoned house near the Kondavil military check-post?

(4) About Thenuka Selvarajah, a 5th grade student at Atchuveli Mahavidyalayam who was abducted and gang raped by army personnel attached to Puttur army camp on November 2, 1996? Luckily the sexually abused and psychologically tormented child escaped to tell of her experience.

(5)About Murugesapillai Koneswary, mother of 4 children, of Central Camp, Amparai District, gang raped and killed by thugs in army uniform on May 17, 1997?

(6) About the disappearances of 651 Thamils in the Jaffna peninsula alone since the occupation of the Sinhala army in 1995? The parents of these missing persons have staged protest fasts in Jaffna with no avail.

(7) About the murder of 8 Thamils by the Sinhalese Police and Muslim Home Guards at 4th Colony in the Amparai district on 23rd September 1997? Over 40 houses were torched by the so-called "guardians of law"? This is the seventh time the 4th Colony was attacked by the Sinhalese police.

Suffice to say the list is endless. These are not only human rights violations; but also are serious war crimes and crimes against humanity. The" Concerned Human Rights Organizations" which appear to have suddenly sprang up for the sole purpose of making a mountain out of a molehill on behalf of Jeyaraj should honestly answer the above questions. If no satisfactory answers are forthcoming we will presume this organization exists for the sole purpose of shedding tears for the handful of Quislings among

Were Tamil Tigers framed over Colombo bombing?

"A Melbourne woman may have innocently unearthed shocking evidence the Sri Lankan army was behind a bomb attack this month that injured her and killed 13 people", writes Andrew Bolt from Hong Kong in the SUNDAY HERALD SUN, Melbourne of October 26.

Says Andrew Bolt:

"The woman - who wishes to be known only as "Susan" was a witness to the bombing 11 days ago and her account backs claims by Tamil Tiger guerrillas that they have again been framed by the government.

"It seemed a set-up", she said. "What I saw was quite strange. I believe it was an army operation".

Susan alleges soldiers fired into the sea during the attack, and wandered casually through heavy automatic weapon fire without taking cover or seeming concerned for their safety.

"She also saw armed men in floral shirts whom she assumed were the "terrorists" walk to a parked van and slowly drive off amid sounds of heavy firing.

"Another tourist hurt in the attack Englishman Bernard Etkind said he saw the alleged terrorists running beside a vehicle , firing into the air.

"Susan's allegations come three weeks after a presidential commission admitted two previous assassinations blamed on the Tigers were in fact the work of the then-President Ranasinghe Premadasa.

"And they are supported by the army's inability to explain how soldiers allowed the truck carrying the 300 kg bomb into a heavily guarded part of Colombo banned to heavy vehicles.

"The Sri Lankan government immediately blamed the separatist Tamil Tigers for the bombing, and said five of the attackers had been killed or committed suicide ...

Susan said she was sleeping in a room at the Hilton Hotel when she was woken at 6.50 a.m. by the sound of automatic gunfire.

"From her window she overlooked a car park where the bomb eventually went off and to her right was the World Trade Centre which the government later claimed was the Tigers's target.

"Susan said she saw two soldiers strolling along an open walkway at the Trade Centre. They were looking down at an area less than 100 metres away where heavy firing was taking place, but they kept their weapons pointing up, did not take cover and then wandered off.

"Susan said she then saw two soldiers with a rocket launcher at the entrance to the hotel's swimming pool car park. "They fired the rocket launcher straight down the road and into the ocean", she said.

"There was absolutely nothing there. They then threw the launcher away and wandered slowly to the tennis club, absolutely unconcerned with being shot.

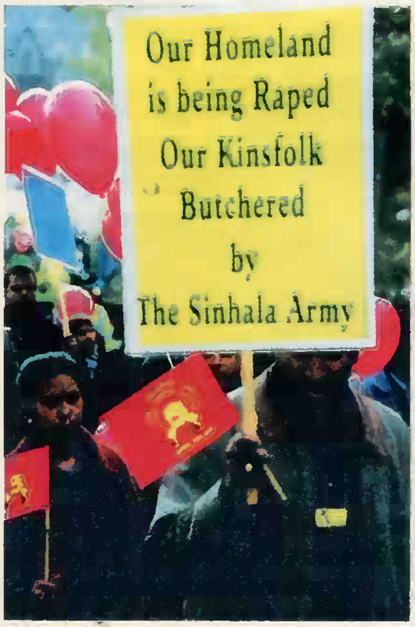
"Susan said she was still watching from her window 15 minutes after the shooting started. "That's when the bomb went off and the windows just blew in. If we had been watching from the corner of the room, we wouldn't be here now".

"Sri Lanka's Deputy Defence Minister General Anuruddha Ratwatte said a security "loophole" had allowed the Tamil Tigers to drive the truck into the city centre and the high-security zone around the World Trade Centre."

Edinburgh warms up to the Tamils

Desperate attempts by the Sri Lanka High Commission in London, and their agents to stall the proposed special chartered train to take 600 British-based Tamils to Edinburgh on 25 October failed. They did notch up one minor success, but even that turned out to be a blessing in disguise, for the Tamil cause.

The High Commission sent a "strongly worded" letter to the Edinburgh City Council, the police and the British gvernment officials not to allow the event to go ahead on the ground that it promoted the cause of "terrorists".The Waverley Shopping Centre, a privately owned one, apparently succumbed to the mischief. Having promised its roof top for a Tamil marquee, the managers went back on their word. Alternate arrangements were made to set up a more spacious marquee at the Meadows Park further away, which meant that the procession covered a longer route attracting bigger attention from the Edinburgh residents lining up the route.



Nick Thorpe reporting for THE SCOTSMAN wrote:

"The High Commission spokesman claimed that the Tamil Centre for Human Rights which organised the festival was a front organisation for LTTE, which has international headquarters in Londonbut which was recently listed as "a terrorist" organisation by the United States

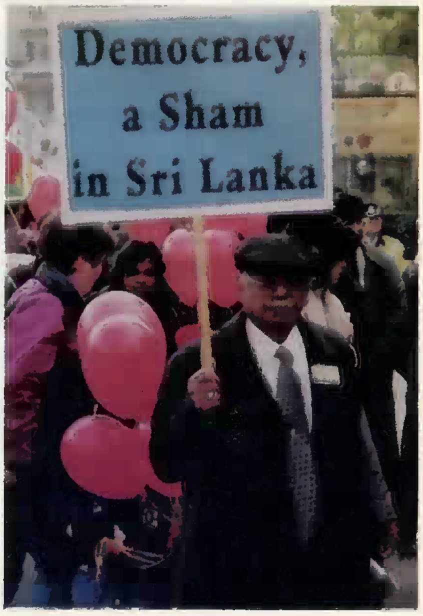
"However, Deirdre McConnell, an international human rights advocate for the Tamil Centre for Human Rights denied that her organisation was a terrorist front, though the two groups often shared information.

"The festival is principally a cultural and human rights event which the high commission is misrepresenting as a terrorist threat- none of the people involved in this have any invilvement in violence or have any intention of getting involved", McConnell said.

"We are for independence for the Tamils, but there's a spectrum of ways of trying to do it and our organisation thinks the best way to do it is to promote the cultural identity of the Tamils in this country".

Norman Ireland, project manager for Commonwealth Edinburgh '97 told Nick Thorpe that the Edinburgh City Council, supported by the British government and security staff, had "no grounds" to bar the Tamils from attending the event.

"We don't ban people in this country in the same way as they do in other countries", he said. The Council had been very supportive of the group from the beginning, Ms.McConnell added.



Human Rights Conference

As part of the day's activities, a conference was organised by the Tamil Centre for Human Rights (TCHR).

The theme of the conference was 'Democratic governance and Human Rights - in Sri Lanka'. The event was chaired by *Mr. James Karan* of the International Federation of Tamils. The panelists included *Ms Mann* (coordinator of the TCHR), *Dr. Ratneswaran* (from the Medical Institute of Tamils), *Mr. Vasantha Raja* (Editor, Tamil Guardian), *Ms. Deirdre McConnell* (International human rights advocate) and *Adrian Wijemane* (Sinhala scholar and historian).

The audience consisted of NGOs, academics, political and military analysts. The President of the Commonwealth Lawyers Association, *Mr. R. Hansen* QC and the Vice President, *Chief (Mrs) P. Kuye*, spoke. Mr. Hansen opened the conference with a talk on the responsibility of the Commonwealth to address serious human rights violations by the Commonwealth states. He also spoke on the implications of the Harare Declaration on human rights and good governance and expressed concern at the situation in Sri Lanka. Mrs. Kuye called for international pressure on governments which violate human rights, and noted the grave situation in both Nigeria and Sri Lanka.

Mr. Param (from the Tamil Lawyers association) also addressed the audience.

Tamil Vigil

Over a hundred Tamil people participating in the Tamil Forum's events in Edinburgh staged a peaceful demonstration outside the International Conference centre. 50 heads of state were meeting inside for an all day session.

The maximum number of protestors permitted, numbering some 120 held placards and shouted slogans. Tamil men and women of all ages took part and were joined by many well-wishing Edinburgh residents. Considerable interest was generated in the press and in other visitors to the centre. This was heightened when a senior police officer instructed the Centre's security detail to stand down, as the protestors did not pose the threat described by Sri Lankan propaganda.

In the Tamil Eelam marquee

Here is a story from a volunteer who was helping organise the marquee for the festival in Edinburgh:

The man who was delivering gas cylinders was asking me what the show was for. I said it was to show there's two different cultures in Sri Lanka and it would be something different to get people's attention to the problem there. Then he said, "oh, so are you Sinhalese? I said no, I was Tamil,and I told him some things about us trying to raise awareness of our situation. He said, "what you have to remember is all sense of identity is born out of struggle, and if you just sit back and talk then you'll just get walked all over". I was pleasantly surprised and so I agreed, I said:"Well exactly, you need some teeth".

He looked at me, smiled and said "Tiger teeth!".

* * * * *

In the marquee during the event, one elderly Scottish woman was talking with her husband, she wanted to get a Tiger flag for herself. But he whispered no, maybe they don't have very many. But she was so eager to get one she asked one of the volunteers if she could have a flag to take home. The volunteer quickly looked around to see if anyone had a flag, he spotted a little Tamil boy with one. He asked the boy in Tamil if he would give his flag to the Scottish woman, and he would make sure that when they got bac kto the train he would give him another one. At first the boy didn't understand, and then his mother came up looking worried, "what's he been doing?" The volunteer explained about the flag and the Scottish woman, so the boy gave up his flag. The Scottish woman was feeling guilty, "oh no, I couldn't take his flag from him". The volunteer explained that he could get the boy a flag in the train and urged her to take the flag. When the Tiger flag was in her hands she looked at her husband full of delight. When she saw the volunteer again she begged him to make sure the boy got another flag, "otherwise I would feel too guilty!"

Letters

“Strengthen the hands of the LTTE, that’s the only way” *- ex-M.P*

Ex-M.P. for Kayts
V. Navaratnam

Mr. Editor,

I wonder who wrote the LTTE press release “No Lying about Casualties, (August issue, page 10) telling the world that the LTTE took up arms “for the restoration of the lost rights of the Tamil nation.” I wish to believe that these -words have inadvertently crept into the press release, because it has never been known to be the declared objective of the LTTE from the very first day they took up arms.

The Conciliatory language of “winning the lost rights of the Tamils” belonged to the half a century ancient good old days when we mistakenly believed that self-inflicted suffering in Satyagraha and non-violent struggles would move the hearts of the international community of states by some magic and help us to obtain justice and have our lost rights restored to us. The right to speak in Tamil to our wives while in bed without getting permission from Mr.Bandaranaike, the right to occupy and live on the fruit of our land we inherited from our ancestors, the right to give our children the education we wished and they merited, the right of employment in state service on our own merits, the right to engage in trade industry and commerce like any other citizen, these and the like are the elementary birthright “lost rights” by the restoration of which the conciliatory Tamil leadership of a bygone era once believed the Tamils could live in harmony in a united Ceylon - until the advent of Prabhakaranism. Those days are gone. We have since sacrificed more than 75,000 Tamil lives, precious self-sacrificing fighters and innocent civilians.

“Thy hand is alone is thy sure help”

If on the other hand the author of the press release believes that by reverting back to this antiquated rhetoric of restoring lost rights the LTTE leadership of the Prabhakaran era could mollify international governments, then he or she is wrong. **International governments don’t care two hoots about the lost rights of Tamils in Ceylon, all they are interested in is the outcome of the war. That alone has a bearing on their geopolitics and self-interest. They are watching to see whether or not their protege will emerge victorious, they don’t care a damn what means or methods their protege employs to achieve victory.** Have you forgotten that they rolled out the red carpet to Jayewardene who declared that he could order his Army to kill all the Tamils ? If total annihilation of the Tamil population cannot be avoided to achieve that victory, so be it genocide, mass rape, slaughter of the civil population, massacre of children, dwellings bulldozed and razed to the ground, to Hell with Human Rights, International governments do not consider that the Tamils count in their scheme of things. That is the stark reality which the Tamils must learn quickly

This reality was brought home to me in a very forceful way recently. while testifying in a case in a Superior Court in Canada I had occasion to tell the Court that all governments in Ceylon since June 1972, including the current one, are illegitimate under the laws and the lawful Constitution of the country. The presiding Judge, Mr.Justice Max Teitelbaum, remarked that the United Nations recognised it. The b... fool that I was, I tried to argue International law. I asked, “Will international recognition confer legitimacy on a so-called government which is otherwise illegitimate according to its own laws and under the country's own Constitution ?” His Lordship replied, “That is a very good question, Sir, but we live in this world, we don't live by theory.”

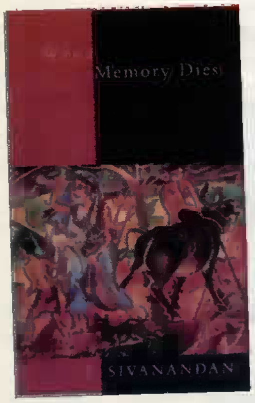
That's it. That in a nutshell is the stark reality of the times and the world we live in. It opened my eyes for the first time. Yes, Democracy is a theory. Rule of Law is a theory. Law and Order is a theory. Ceylon's Soulbury Constitution is a theory. Human rights is a theory. Even the United Nations Charter is a theory. Mr. Ana Pararajasingham put his finger on the crux of this reality when he wrote (*HOT SPRING*, July issue) that the war in Ceylon eludes resolution “because the International Community has generally acted in such a way as to preserve the status quo by tacitly or otherwise supporting the dominant nation”, i.e. the Sinhalese. He might as well have added that it mattered little to the International Community's determination to preserve that the “status quo” in Ceylon is tainted with illegitimacy and was brought into being, and continues to hold on, by wading in rivers of Tamil civilian blood.

How soever much English we may write it is not going to make the slightest dent in the International Community's determination to help preserve the status quo in Ceylon even if it leads to the possible extermination of the Tamils. We have already seen their mindset, It, therefore, behoves the global international community of Tamils to do everything in their power to strengthen the hands of Prabhakaran and his brave self-sacrificing army of LTTE fighters. Remember LTTE saying of old: “‘than Kaiye thanakku uthavum” - thy hand alone is thy sure help.

However, the purpose of my writing to you now, Mr. Editor, is to suggest, let there be no more mention of “restoring the lost rights of the Tamils” even inadvertently. The revival of the sovereign independent state of Tamil Eelam is not negotiable nor reducible. No more talks, no more pacts, no mediation, no sitting round a table, except to agree on the boundaries between the two states of Tamil Eelam and Sri Lanka. That is the least we can do to propitiate and please the more than 75,000 souls which are watching from their abode of divinity.

V. Navaratnam

Once Again on “When Memory Dies”



I believe. fundamentally, that those much closer to the Tamil liberation war than I are most able to respond. but I must write a short reply to Balakrishnan's comment on my review of A. Sivanandan's highly acclaimed novel *When Memory Dies* (July issue)

I agree with Balakrishnan that the last lines” That's enough. I am taking over” by Yogi allows the book a different interpretation than I give it. But I think that this is little more than a device. (perhaps even deliberately left as a false trail for those willing to follow it?) and it goes against the whole emotional direction of the book's last chapters, which are to undermine the legitimacy of a violent response from the Jaffna youth to their national oppression. Yogi has just knocked the gun out of Ravi's hand the pistol with which he shot Vijay and with it the only decent thing left in the island' If - the boys' leader has just murdered the only decent thing left. What is there to be hopefull for?

There is little content to the claim that the Yogi character represents a socialist vision of the liberation struggle in contrast to one that is purely nationalist. It is a vision of liberation without struggle more like. Furthermore Sivanandan stops the novel at the point he chooses. As a consequence there is no illumination of the liberation movement's practice concerning the role of women. or the caste system,the collective forms that it takes or its plans for the future Eelam.

I can only repeat two questions from my original review which Balakrishnan's reply does not address: why doesn't Sivanandan repudiate the open anti-LTTE sentiments that his reviewers in the English press have attributted to his novel? Why hasn't the London based journal *Race and Class* which Sivanandan edits reported on the Tamil Eelam war for the last eight years?

Andy Higginbottom
PO Box 8446
London N17 6NZ
6 October 1997

Mandela does some plain speaking

President Nelson Mandela who hogged much of the limelight at the Commonwealth summit at Edinburgh was already much in the news when he visited Libya considered a "disreputable" country in the eyes of the U.S. government. The South African leader's arrival in Tripoli drew sharp criticism from the U.S.State Department which described his gesture of friendship to Libyan leader Gaddafi as "disappointing and unfortunate".

Mr.Mandela who had already spoken of "American arrogance" was driven across the desert to the Libyan capital from neighbouring Tunisia to avoid breaching the UN air embargo on Libya.

In an Egyptian television interview broadcast as he arrived in Tripoli to an ecstatic welcome, Mr. Mandela attacked "countries that played policemen of the world". He said South Africa would never let its policies be dictated from outside

The Libyan leader was clearly delighted with Mr.Mandela's support and gave the 79-year old African statesman a particularly warm embrace before taking him on a tour of the ruins of the presidential palace and other reminders of the 1985 U.S. bombing of Tripoli.

Referring in the TV interview to the veto powers of the five permanent UN Security Council members (America, Britain,China, France and Russia), Mr.Mandela said: "It is totally unacceptable that five countries should arrogate to themselves the power of blocking decisions of the Security Council through the veto", he said. "The veto must be removed and all the continents must be equally represented in that body".

Nelson Mandela and Col.Gaddafi outside Gaddafi's Tripoli home which was hit by U.S. bombs in 1986.

Earlier, responding to U.S. protests over his impending visit to Libya, Mr.Mandela said: "How can they (Washington) have the arrogance to dictate to us where we should go or who our friends should be". The comments according to Johannesburg's SUNDAY INDEPENDENT were made to some 500 dignitaries at a banquet held to honour former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere.

"They are so dull... Can you imagine if I said Boris Yeltsin should not visit Albania? They would say that I am the most arrogant black man", an emotional Mandela said. "Notwithstanding the changes in the world, the contempt for blacks is still deep-seated. But I am the m.aster of my own fate", he said to applause from diplomats.

Libya has been under an air embargo for refusing to hand over to Britain or the United States the suspects implicated in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 270 people. Mandela's position is that the accused will not get a fair trial in either country, considering the fact that the case against the Libyans has already been prejudiced; and hence the trial should take place in the Hague.

The 79-year old statesman has derided the U.S. on several occasions, in response to White House opposition to South Africa's links with Cuba, Iran and Syria.

T.R.O. Christmas cards in aid of displaced Tamil children

The Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (T.R.O.) is planning to sell Christmas cards in aid of the Educational Project for the displaced Tamil children in Tamil Eelam. Details could be had from the T.R.O. office at 79, Hoe Street, Walthamstow, London E17 4SA (Tel:0181- 520 58760

The T.R.O. is a registered charitable organisation in Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. Its International Coordinating Office is in Australia and it has got branches in 18 countries. It is the major nongovernmental organisation working along with the International NGOs such as Red Cross, Oxfam, MSF. Save the Children Fund and so on.

T.R.O. was founded in the middle of 1985 to look after the welfare of the Tamil refugees who were forced to flee to India by boats following the Sri Lankan military atrocities in the North and East. There were about 150,000 displaced people sheltered in 120 camps in different districts in Tamil Nadu. Each of the camps held 50-60 families who had difficulty in finding medical and basic help including food for babies.

Following the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, TRO operations were moved to the North and East of Sri Lanka, to help those in need of training in different projects for widows and helpless families. But following the mass exodus of over 500,000 people from Jaffna to the mainland Vanni district in 1995, the work load of the TRO increased by 100 per cent.

The projects undertaken by TRO are:Temporary Shelters, Medical Centres, Farming schemes, Educational and Selfemployment projects.

The current projects undertaken by TRO include Welfare Centres for children orphaned by the war and for elderly and sick people and nutritional centres for mothers and babies.

TRO is able to carry out these projects with the help of donations from not only Tamil expatriates but also of non-Tamil communities in the West. ❏

One of TRO's projects: Caring for children orphaned by the war from the HOT SPRING archives Issue 2

"Singapore - A Truly Multiracial Society"

S. Rajaratnam

Senior Minister

(Prime Minister's Office)

> *'....racial, linguistic, cultural or religious conflicts and violence are the consequence of crooked politics and cowardly leadership'.*
>
> *"Unlike in a communally oriented society, in Singapore talent and merit are encouraged and rewarded regardless of whether these manifest themselves in a Chinese, Malay, Indian, Ceylonese or Eurasian Singaporean'.*

MY wife and I are happy to join with you in celebrating tonight the 75th Anniversary of the Singapore Ceylon Tamils Association. this is, therefore, an appropriate occasion as any to discuss a subject that must be in the forefront of minds of Singapore Ceylon Tamils. What is our future going to be the next 75 years? **There was a time not so long ago when the Singapore Ceylon Tamil could comfort himself with the thought that should life prove intolerable for him in Singapore he could, as his forefathers once did, pack up his bag and return to his ancestral land to reclaim his birthright.**

Conflicts

That option is no longer available. His birthright is today in jeopardy. while the future of Singapore Ceylon Tamils who migrated to Singapore about the middle of the last century is promising that of the Tamils who chose to remain behind in the land of their forefathers is tragic and uncertain. It is not my purpose tonight to go into the rights and wrongs of the bitter conflict now raging between Singhalese and Tamils. All I want to do tonight is to highlight for Singapore Tamils, the single most important lesson they must draw from the tragedy in Ceylon. It is that racial, linguistic, cultural or religious conflicts and violence are the consequence of crooked politics and cowardly leadership. The tragedy becomes inevitable when avaricious, ignorant and totally unprincipled politicians play on the stupid prejudices and primitive emotions of a people who allow themselves to be led to perdition by spurious messiahs. Racial, religious and language conflicts are not peculiar to Ceylon. They are taking place today in most of Asia in the name of race, language, religion, culture or even economic justice. It is taking place in Africa where it has reached genocidal proportions. There are stirrings of it even in highly developed Western Europe—North Ireland and Spain are examples. Racial and religious conflicts are growing at an unprecedented rate in many parts of the world.

The persecution and attempted decimation of minorities is as old as history. Their causes are many and varied Behind the patriotic posturing used to justify racial and communal violence stalks the politics of envy by the unsuccessful and the indolent of the hard working and the successful. They are often cover for looting and robbing of the successful by the unsuccessful. Communal politics more often than not flourishes in an environment of desperate poverty, inept and weak governments and corrupt politicians.

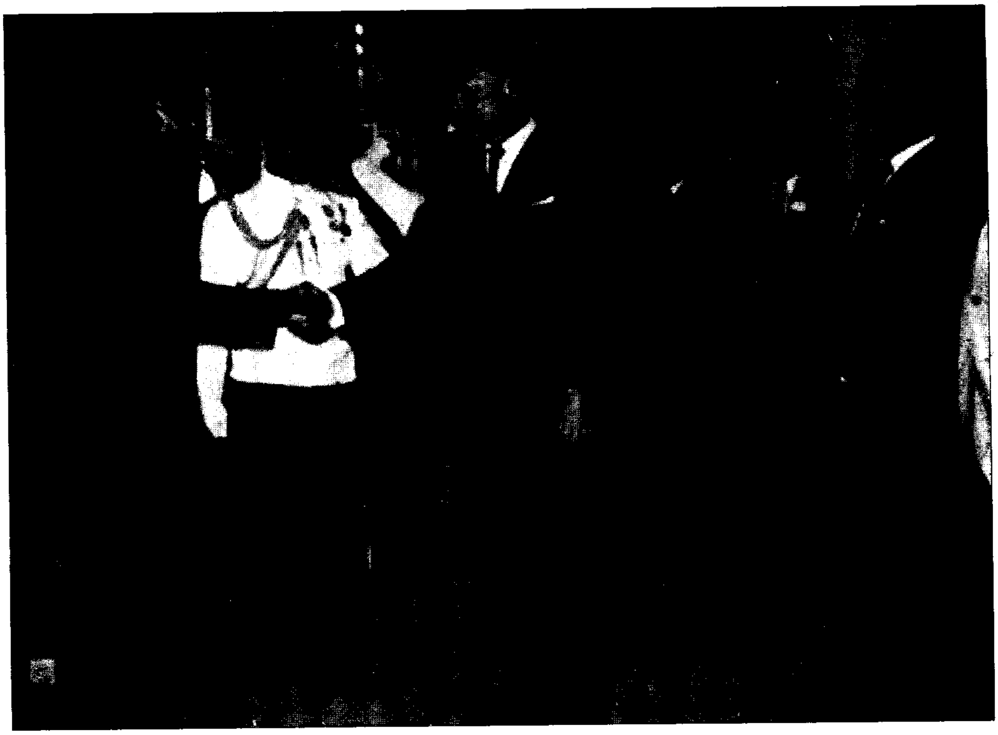
What is happening in Ceylon is, therefore, not an exception but the rule in contemporary politics.

Singapore is an exception

Singapore is one of the few exceptions to the general rule about communal politics in Asia. I am not saying that there are no individual instances of communal and racial prejudice in Singapore. There have been and there are still such manifestations. But these have never assumed serious political proportions simply because over the past 25 years you have had in Singapore a government which has taken care not to make itself hostage to communal politics and has never hesitated to come down hard on communalist and chauvinist when they reared their heads even if this entailed high political costs.

So the simple answer to the question: "What future for Ceylon Tamils in Singapore?" is— make sure that the present form of government and leadership style and outlook persists in Singapore for the next 75 sears. Our style of government may have other imperfections but in so far as the security, rights and general well being of minorities are concerned, the kind of government style and approach to problems that has prevailed since independence has been the impregnable shield which has protected Singapore's minorities. In saying this I am not using this occasion to act as recruiting sergeant for the PAP. Of course it would be nice if I can get all

Ceylon Tamils to become PAP stalwart but that is irrelevant. Whether Ceylon Tamils are pro- or anti-PAP will make no difference to the future of the PAP.**In a population numbering about two and half million the Ceylon Tamils number no more than 30,000. In fact the total number of all Tamils in Singapore is not more than 100,000. So politically the government can if it wants to, totally ignore the Ceylon Tamils and for that matter all Tamils without suffering any political disability. It can — but over the past 25 years, this government has shown extra concern for the rights and dignity of minorities. It has resisted the temptation to placate the majority at the expense of the minorities.**



Flashback to 1971: Lee Kuan Yew, then Prime Minister of Singapore welcomes President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania at the Commonweath Heads of Government meeting held in Singapore, while Foreign Minster S.Rajaratnam (right) looks on.

The point I am, therefore, trying to make tonight is something altogether different. It is that Ceylon Tamils and for that matter all Tamils need the present style of government more than the government needs them. I know that there are some Ceylonese who think that Singapore needs to be delivered from the kind of government Singapore has known the past 25 sears but in my humble opinion, they need to have their heads examined.

My concern tonight therefore is not with the future of the PAP Government. Its fate will in fact be decided by voters numbering over one million and not by 30,000 Ceylon Tamils.My concern is with our fate, our future.

Let me put our problem more starkly. If something should go wrong with Singapore's politics and there is no written guarantee from the Creator that it cannot then there is no escape hatch for Ceylon Tamils. We could be trapped in a communal fire. Indian Tamils can, if they are lucky, go back to the vast subcontinent they came from. There is an escape route for the Malays, too. But there is no place for Ceylon Tamils to run to, short of a miraculous return to sanity in their ancestral homeland.

Equal opportunity for all

I am putting our problem starkly simply because I am reaching the end of my political career and I have therefore nothing to gain politically or materially by bluffing you. My political future is behind me and I am satisfied. What I want to underline for you is that should the present style of government be changed then the future of Ceylon Tamils will indeed be bleak. You may or may not have good grounds for being critical on other aspects of its policies, but one of this government's greatest achievements has been not only to spare minority communities the indignities and dangers to which minorities have been exposed in many Asian and African countries, but it has in addition offered them opportunities for social, cultural and material advancement unavailable to them in their ancestral lands.

For that matter even the majority community realise that life for them the past 25 years has been better in every way in Singapore than what they could have enjoyed in the land of their forefathers.

At the risk of embarrassing myself by appearing to be unjustifiably immodest, I have often wondered whether I could have attained the position I now hold in the Singapore Cabinet had I stayed on in Ceylon and ventured into its politics. Let me hasten to add that I would be very distressed indeed were I made to understand that I am holding the position I now do in the Cabinet simply because I am a Ceylon Tamil. I like to think I am where am, purely on the basis of merit. If I have to be modest then it may I be that I fooled the Prime Minister into believing that I had great merits.

It is only in a communally oriented government that meritocracy

is suspect and demonstration of merit on the part of members of a minority severely punished by beating them up, by discrimination in jobs, by persecution, by burning, looting and even by patriotic murders.

Communalism contained

How has this government succeeded in containing communalism? The answer is simple. It has dealt toughly and courageously with every manifestation of communalism whether from minorities or from the majority community When Singapore was a part of Malaysia, Muslim extremists tested the will and nerves of the Singapore Government which then controlled neither the police nor the army. The extremists believed that by fomenting racial riots they could compel the Singapore Government to depart from its multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural policies. The extremists pressed for their form of multi-racialism. It was that while all races and all languages were theoretically equal, in practice a particular race and a particular language had to be officially designated more equal than the rest.

A bigger test of the government's adherence to multi racialism came after independence in 1965. A group of Chinese chauvinist, aware that their community constituted some 75 percent of the population, wanted a multi-racialism and a multi-racialism which while nominally conceding equality for all wanted Chinese language and culture to be the dominant consideration. Prior to this, the local Communists had under the guise of promoting Marxism, in fact promoted Chinese chauvinism by trying to make Singapore an outpost of the Chinese Communist revolution.

Attempts to exploit Chinese chauvinism

After 1965 the cause of Chinese chauvinism was picked up by a group of politically ambitious non-Communist chauvinist. They charged the PAP Government with betraying Chinese language and culture. They believed that in a predominantly Chinese Singapore, where the Chinese had overwhelming voting strength, the government could be panicked into opting for Chinese chauvinism. Some of you may remember that the battle on behalf of Chinese chauvinism was led by a Chinese newspaper and its millionaire owner. Had the PAP been led by unprincipled leaders concerned only with holding political office, then the obvious thing would have been to play along with the chauvinist. The PAP could win every election hands down for a while at least. The price it would have to pay in return was betrayal of its multiracial principles and the sacrifice of the minorities who made up 20 per cent of the population. Had the PAP taken this easy path to political power, the plight of the Ceylon Tamils and for that matter all minorities Would today be as desperate as that of the Tamils in Ceylon.

A secure place for minorities

Fortunately for the minorities of Singapore, the PAP leadership, and in particular the Prime Minister, chose not the easy solution but the most difficult and most courageous solution simply because it was, from his point of view, the most honourable solution. He detained both the proprietor and senior editors of the paper. You may recollect the hue and cry that was then raised world wide by so called liberals. They accused an allegedly autocratic Mr Lee Kuan Yew of trampling democracy, human rights and free speech. The pressure to release the three chauvinistic detainees was relentless and unusually sustained. had the Prime Minister succumbed, I am certain that communalism and racialism would be as much a part of Singapore's politics as it is in Ceylon and elsewhere today. That is why you should be cautious of critics who claim to be more mindful of the rights and welfare of Singaporeans than the elected leaders of Singapore.

If as a member of a minority community, I were asked to name the most outstanding of Mr Lee Kuan Yew's policy achievements, I would point to the courageous way in which he put through language and cultural policies which have been fair to both minorities and majority alike and, more important, effectively ensured that there would be no discrimination by the majority against the minority. **His language policy is a measure of his wisdom and his far sightedness. By making English the link language in Singapore while allowing each community freely to learn its own language and culture, he has ensured that the minorities have a proper and secure place in Singapore. In addition to English being the conduit pipe for modern science and technology, all communities have a fair and equal chance of acquiring proficiency in a language that gives them ready access to unhampered economic and political participation.**

The only discrimination the government recognises and encourages is discrimination which rewards talent and hard work. Unlike in a communally oriented society, in Singapore talent and merit are encouraged and rewarded regardless of whether these manifest themselves in a Chinese, Malay, Indian, Ceylonese or Eurasian Singaporean. In a communal society, talent is presumed to exist only in a privileged community and manifestation of it in other communities should be treated as an affront to national honour and dignity deserving of the severest punishment.

So my advice to Ceylon Tamils in Singapore is two-fold. Make sure, to the best of your ability that Singapore is ruled by a government which is single-mindedly non-communal and secondly cultivate among our community meaningful talent and zest for hard work.

If you bear these two objectives in mind, then there will be a bright future for Ceylon Tamils 75 years from now even if - which I fervently hope will not happen they become extinct.

NORTH-EAST MERGER, SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE

P. Varothayasingham

1. In the joint Northern-Eastern Provincial Council elections held in November 1988, in the Eastern Province the Tamils won 17 seats and the Tamil Muslims won 17 seats. The ruling UNP contested in some eastern areas and won only one seat.

2. The Provincial Council was for the merged, although temporarily, Northern and Eastern Provinces. The merger was to be confirmed by a referendum on or before 31 December 1988.

3. The Peace Accord stated that the President may, at his discretion, postpone such a referendum. It was widely understood at that time that the requirement for a referendum would be waived.

4. The referendum was never held and was postponed indefinitely.

5. The intention behind calling the merger temporary rather than permanent was tactical rather than strategic. It was an exercise in semantics to minimise the bloodletting that was going on. Though no provision was made in the event of not holding the referendum the Peace Accord did not say that the temporary merger would cease or lapse in the course of time if the referendum was not held.

6. A simple majority was considered to be sufficient to determine the result of the proposed referendum. Given that Tamils and Tamil Muslims won 34 seats compared to just one for the UNP representing the Singhalese, the result of a referendum is a foregone conclusion confirming the merger.

7.The Labour Government in UK held two referendums in September this year to decide separate assemblies for Scotland and Wales.

8. The Scottish referendum was restricted to the Scots and the Welsh referendum to the Welsh. The Scots voted "yes"to both the Edinburgh parliament and to tax raising powers and they will have their own parliament for the first time since the Act of Union in 1707. Sovereignty will remain in Westminster, and,although the new parliament will be free to debate independence, it will not have the power to break away without consent from London.

9.The UK Government's belief that Westminster remains sovereign conflicts with the more populist belief that it is the people who are sovereign. In the ultimate sense, popular sovereignty will prevail and it is the people who are sovereign. However, in Britain with no formal written constitution, Parliament is sovereign and has the last word in any legislative matter. It is a common law convention evolved from the long political development in Britain. This, however, does not apply to Sri Lanka where only popular sovereignty applies. So it is the people who are sovereign in Ceylon.

10. The people in the Eastern Province exercised their sovereign power and voted in the merged Provincial Council in 1988. The Colombo Government has no power to de-merge the east from the north now. The Tamils exercised their sovereign power in the 1977 general election and voted for separation and independence. The Colombo National Assembly has no power to override that decision.

11. The Singhala politicians who have been using their armed forces to commit atrocities against the Tamils under the pretext of their draft constitutions of 1972 and 1978 should be brought to trial for their appalling crimes. What is happening in Bosnia should be a warning to these war criminals including Chandrika Kumaratunga. The precedent is there for the war crime tribunals.

12. The UK Government may recognise a new state but it does not recognise regimes. Eelam may be recognised once the Tamils agree on a democratic constitution. The Government formed from the elected representatives will then be recognised. ■

10 out of 750 Tamils " disappeared" now confirmed dead

The Human Rights Task Force (HRTF) sitting in Jaffna for the fifth time in as many months has said that at least 10 of the 750 Tamils who have "disappeared" after arrest by the occupying Sinhalese military are confirmed dead. The admission came only after substantial pressure from the Guardian Association for Persons Arrested and Disappeared. The Association represents mothers, wives and relatives of the disappeared. An ICRC official recently stated that the deliberations of the HRTF have not halted human rights violations by the Sinhalese armed forces in Jaffna, and events prove these violations are an unstoppable process.

U.S. "Terrorist List" and "U.S. Green Berets" in Colombo

The U.S. has banned members of 30 so called Terrorist organisations including the LTTE who are fighting to break away from Sinhala dominated oppressive regime in Sri Lanka.

The minority Tamils have had enough and have decided to go back to their homelands as a free people and determine for themselves how they are going to govern themselves. But the majority Sinhala community are not allowing this and claim the whole island as belonging to them ignoring historical facts just because they are in the majority.

This refusal is against the Charter of Human Rights but the U.S. are backing Sri Lanka and stoking up communal feelings by getting the "*Green Berets*" to train the Sri Lankan forces in jungle counter-insurgency. The "*Time*'" magazine reported this in their issue of 27th October 1997.

They said that the Hilton and Galadari hotels were damaged by the truck-bomb blast in Colombo on 15th October 1997 and "among the hotels' guests were American diplomats and military personnel, including a small number of green beret commandos training Sri Lankan forces in jungle counter-insurgency."

So what is the difference between the Liberation Tigers who are fighting for their freedom and labelled as "Terrorists" and the U.S. Green Berets supporting state tyranny of the state of Sri Lanka. Aren't they doing the same "Terrorist!" thing aiding and abetting state tyranny which is genicidally terrorising the Tamils of Sri Lanka in their homelands? So shouldn't the U.S. ban the Green Berets from Sri Lanka too?

A.J.N. Selvadurai

" Wrong question asked from the wrong people "

The referendum recently held in Scotland is instructive in that the Scottish people, and only they, were asked whether they wanted a parliament of their own A distinct people with their own traditional homeland but who (in the context of the whole of the United Kingdom) happen to be a minority, were invited to express their wishes. The rest of the population of Britain (in terms of overall numbers, an overwhelming majority) had no say at all in the matter. In other words, the proper and just question is "Do you people wish to be independent?" and not, "Shall we [italicised] give them [italicised] their freedom?"

Applying this analogy, in the referendum proposed by the government of Sri Lanka, only the Tamil people should be asked; should be allowed to vote. And, what is more, the question asked in the referendum should not be of the government's choosing , but one which the Tamil people in the North and East would themselves, choose to confront. The referendum outlined by the government is cowardly because it avoids the real issue, one for which the Tamil people have sacrificed and suffered so much. It is cowardly and also both bizarre and false in that, essentialy, it is not Tamil but Sinhalese opinion which is being sought: the tyranny of the majority of numbers will prevail. The wrong questions are being asked of the wrong people, and so the whole exercise is made fraudulent and becomes irrelevant,

P Sarvanesan

J.B. Jeyaratnam - a Tamil who does not speak Tamil

With reference to our news item - U.K. lawyer calls Singapore P.M. a "liar" in court (August issue), a *HOT SPRING* reader from Singapore sends us this news item from *THE STRAITS TIMES* of September 27, 1997 :

"Mr.J.B.Jeyaratnam may not be able to read, write or speakTamil but that does not mean he can evade responsibility for the defamatory remarks in an article in Tamil and published in the Workers' Party newsletter, argued Senior Counsel Harry Elias yesterday

Mr.Elias was representing the 11-member Tamil Language Week organising committee which is suing Mr.Jeyaratnam, Mr.A.Balakrishnan, the author of the offending article, and the Workers' Party for defamation. ......

Our reader adds:

"He (Mr.Jeyaratnam) never bothered to even converse in Tamil as a natural thing in an exclusive Tamil gathering. He never sent his two sons to study Tamil language (which is taught in almost every school in Singapore),a far cry from Prabhakaran's Tamil nationalism ".

Jeyaratnam

Sri Lankan children put up for sale on the Internet

by Julian West in New Delhi

Children as young as five in Sri Lanka are being offered for sale to paedophiles on the Internet.

More than 600 new entries a day are appearing on the world wide web, advertising the island state as the world's child sex centre where children can be bought cheaply and with impunity.

Childcare workers who know of the country's reputation as a paedophiles' paradise, are in despair*

"This makes all our efforts meaningless it's very depressing", said Maureen Seneviratne, who runs PEACE, an organisation to combat child prostitution. "With information like this so easily available on the Net we might as well fold up".

According to Laura Lederer, an American law professor who has monitored the Internet, explicit sexual photographs and advertisement for Sri Lanka frequently appear, and the island is now considered the principal source of child pornography for the United States and Europe. Two years ago Swedish police seized 300 hours of film showing Western men with Sri Lankan children.

Police in Britain and the FBI in the United States are monitoring web sites and last week three members of an Internet ring of paedophiles who circulated images of abuse, were convicted in California.

Paedophile sex has long been freely available in Sri Lanka and any single man walking along a beach is likely to be propositioned.

Childcare workers estimate 10,000 to 12,000 children - often trafficked by what social workers describe as a "mafia", from rural areas - may be involved . The authorities, fearful of damaging a tourist industry already battered by terrorism,

Sri Lanka's Arms purchases 1996-97

The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London WC2E 7NQ in its report on the The Military Balance 1997/98, says:

"Sri Lanka spent heavily on arms in 1996-97. In 1996, it took delivery of 15 T-55 MBTs from the Czech Republic. Other recent purchases include a second medium-sized landing ship (LSM) from China delivered in April 1997, 14 patrol craft (nine Super Dvoratype vessels built under licence from Israel, of which three were delivered by June 1996, and five TRINITY-CLASS SHIPS FROM THE US, three of which were delivered by the end of 1996).

"These replace losses caused by LTTE action. There are reports that ordnance from China (Sri Lanka's principal supplier) has been defective."

The total (active) armed forces, including recalled reservists, are estimated at 112,000 - 117,000.

ARMY: 90,000 -95,000, including recalled reservists and 1,000 women.

NAVY: 12,000, including 1,100 recalled reservists. Bases: Colombo (HQ), Trincomalee (main base), Karainagar, Tangalle, Kalpitiya, Galle, Welisara.

AIR FORCE: 10,000 .

PARA-MILITARY: 110,200. Police Force (Ministry of Defence) 80,000, including reserves 1.000 women and ***Special Task Force***: 3,000-strong anti-guerrilla unit. ***National Guard*** : 15,000: ***Home Guard***: 15,200

The Institute names the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as the sole "Opposition" with a strength of 6,000 and their leader as Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Cricket Board reels under bribery charges

The Sri Lanka Cricket Board was rocked by multi million rupees bribery charges at the highest level, as the country's world champion cricketers were getting ready for a vital four nation tournament in Lahore next week.

Sports Minister S.B. Dissanayake officially requested the Permanent Presidential Commission probing bribery and corruption to investigate allegations that a top official of the Cricket Board had solicited a six million rupees bribe from a world television company and had already obtained half that sum.

Sports Ministry secretary Dr. R.M.K. Ratnayake told the Midweek Mirror that Mr. Dissanayake had launched an official investigation on the bribery charges relating to the contract that the Cricket Board had recently signed with the Worldtel company for exclusive television rights on international matches played in Sri Lanka.

The secretary said the Cricket Board official who allegedly sought the bribe had reportedly told Worldtel officials that the minister would be given part of the bribe and therefore the balance of rupees three million should also be given soon.

Dr. Ratnayake said the minister knew nothing about such a payment and was not in anyway involved.

An outraged Mr. Dissanayake in the letter to the Presidential Commission said the allegation about the bribe to a high official of the cricket board had been made to him on the telephone recently by cricket board President Upali Dharmadasa.

Mr. Dharmadasa told the minister that a Worldtel official had telephoned him to tell him about the bribe demanded by the official.

In a letter to Mr. Dharmadasa the minister has directed him to submit within two weeks a written report on what the Worldtel official had told him about the alleged bribe.

The minister has also told Mr. Dharmadasa to make investigations and take whatever action he deems necessary as head of the Cricket Board.

Mr. Dissanayake said the Cricket Board president had also claimed he had the tape of a conversation between a Worldtel representative and the cricket board official who allegedly sought the bribe. This tape would be made available for investigations.

The minister has told Mr. Dharmadasa that if necessary he should even go abroad and meet Worldtel officials to get more information regarding the bribery charges.

The ministry would provide the funds for such a trip.

Tamil Journalist questioned at gunpoint in Colombo

(FMM/IFEX) - According to "Prajathanthra" (the Foundation for Freedom of Expression - Sri Lanka), *Niresh Eliathamby,* a journalist attached to the Associated Press bureau in Colombo, was held at gunpoint for more than two hours by security services personnel while he was carrying out his duties as a journalist on 15 October 1997, the day of a major bomb explosion in Colombo.

Eliathamby was walking in the Colombo Fort area, about nine hours after the bomb blast. He was taking some rolls of film to his office. He was questioned and taken in by two members of the Sri Lanka Navy, who said he had no right to have film with him or take photographs in that area without the written permission of the Secretary of Defence. The position that a journalist should get special permission from the Secretary of Defence to photograph the site of a bomb explosion and a confrontation, was a position never before taken by the government, the police or the security forces Eliathamby was taken in a van from Colombo to the Sri Lanka Navy base at Rangalla, several miles away, where he was held at gunpoint and ordered to remove his shirt. He was denied a request for a drink of water. Those who interrogated him refused to accept his Accreditation Card as a Journalist of Associated Press issued by the Government's Director of Information. They also refused to take notice of the National Identity Card he carried. He was also refused permission to make a telephone call to his office to verify his identity. The naval personnel who questioned, threatened and treated him roughly, did not take any notice of his requests that they verify his identity and occupation by contacting the Director of Information, the media spokesman of the military, and his colleagues at Associated Press.

He was on the point of being blindfolded when he was able to attract the attention of an officer who was passing by. This officer called in a senior officer who took the necessary steps of verifying his identity and having him released.

While many journalists took photographs of the scene of the explosion and the surroundings that day, there were no restrictions placed on them. The fact that Eliathamby was taken in, questioned and harassed in this manner, much later, when he was alone, appears to be because he belongs to the Tamil community.

The South Asia Bureau Chief of Associated Press, Arthur Max, stationed in New Delhi, has lodged a strong protest with the Government about this mistreatment of Eliathamby, who has been working at AP for several years and is a well-known journalist in Sri Lanka.

" ADJUST YOUR WATCHES, YOU HAVE ENTERED TIGER AREA !"

Madhu, Oct.8: The priest stood up as the bus bumped its way along the dirt road in the darkness, and made an announcement as though he was the pilot of an airliner about to land in a foreign country. "May I have your attention please", said Father Basil Wickramasinghe, who was taking a party of Sinhalese to pray for peace with Tamils in northern Sri Lanka."We have just left the Army area. We are entering the LTTE area, where the time is half an hour behind our time. Please adjust your watches".

Sri Lanka, which had followed Indian time for decades, decided to change to six hours ahead of GMT in May 1996. But the rebels didn't change. The island, 220 km wide, now has two time zones, one for government-controlled areas, another for those held by the rebels . *(AP).*

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Sri Lanka Air chief blamed for air crashes

COLOMBO, Oct 26 (Reuters) - A defence committee investigating the loss of 16 Sri Lanka Air Force aircraft in crashes or rebel attacks has blamed the air chief for two, saying he should have taken intelligence reports seriously, a newspaper reported on Sunday.

The investigators, headed by Defence Secretary Chandrananda De Silva, held Air Marshal Oliver Ranasinghe responsible for the loss of two Avro transport planes in Tamil Tiger missile attacks in April 1995, the Sunday Times said.

The newspaper quoted the committee's report as saying that Ranasinghe had not heeded the advice from intelligence agencies about security risks and declared that "if we were to accept all such reports there would be no air force flying."

"This answer epitomises a complete lack of responsibility by the commander and had he taken the intelligence reports seriously, the loss of two Avro aircraft...may have been averted," the newspaper quoted the committee's report as saying.

Ranasinghe and other defence officials were not immediately available for comment.

The committee investigated the loss of 16 Sri Lanka Air Force planes in crashes and attacks by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam between April 1994 and May 1997, the newspaper said.

The LTTE are fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils in Sri Lanka's north and east.

The attacks on the Avros, within two days of each other, followed the collapse in peace talks between the government and LTTE that were initiated in 1994.

The committee also said that Ranasinghe did not consult anyone in evaluating aircraft requirements and purchases. The newspaper quoted the committee as saying that such decisions should be taken a group of top officials and not by the commander alone. It said the committee had estimated that the total value of equipment and planes lost by the air force since 1994 was nearly $31 million.

The committee, which first met in May this year, had interviewed the air force commander and other senior officials during its investigations, the newspaper reported.

War main cause of heart attack among Sinhala women

One of the main causes of heart attacks among Sinhala women in the southern province of Sri Lanka is the war in the Northeast said Dr. Ruwan Ekanayake of from the Karapitiya hospital in Galle.

He was speaking at a seminar held at the Galle town hall this week. Dr. Ekanayake has researched the incidence of heart attack among adult women in the southern province and was presenting his findings at the seminar.

The majority of women with heart ailment or who have died of heart attacks in recent years have either husbands, sons or brothers in Sri Lankan army units fighting in the Northeast. A number of them had lost their beloved ones in the war said Dr. Ekanayake.

Lack of communication between front line soldiers and their women folk in the villages is compounded by the very meagre leave arrangements the Sri Lankan army is able to provide for its troops in the war front, have placed a great burden on the women. The constant fighting in the north and a creaking logistical system have made R&R (Rest and Recreation) and rotation of troops unthinkable. Many body bags never reach the right place. Hundreds of soldiers are missing in action.

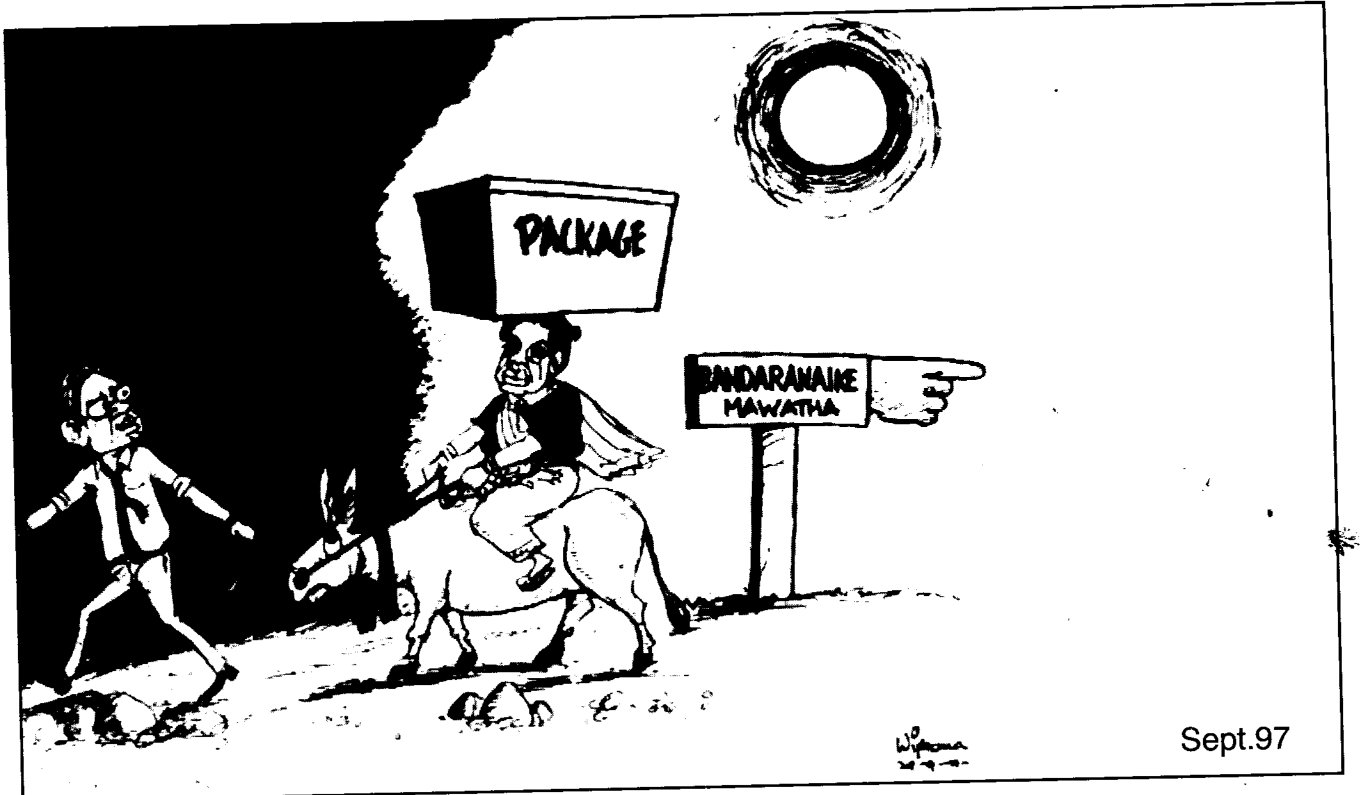
The womenfolk of Sri Lankan soldiers come under a lot of stress as a consequence, having to make ends meet while going from pillar to post trying to find out about their men in the battle zones especially.

The southern province supplies the largest number of recruits to the Sri Lankan army. Most are from very poor families.

(TamilNet)

The progress of the Package

as seen by Sri Lanka's renowned cartoonist Wijesoma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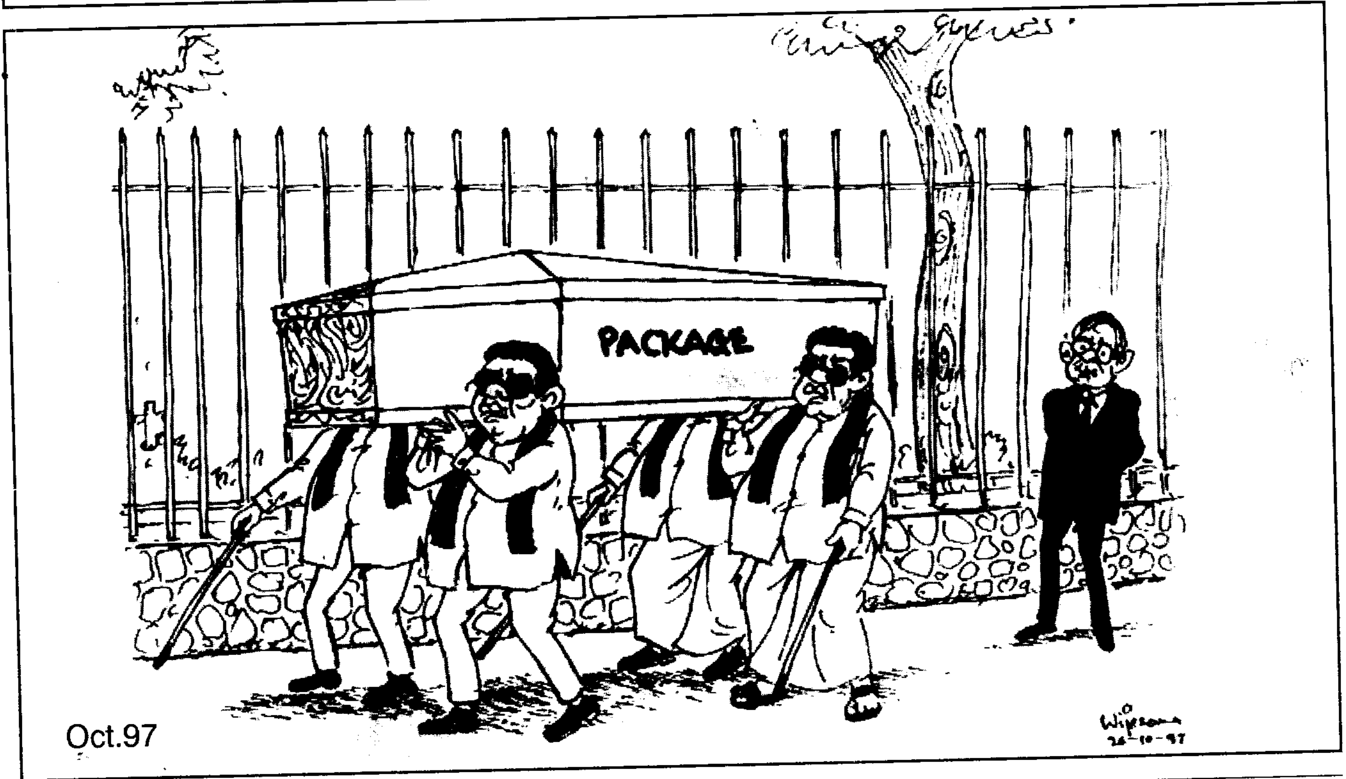

Oct.97

"Army loses battle for minds in Tigers' heartland"

Suzanne Goldenberg

"The Tamils may be routed in Jaffna but Colombo still can't tighten its grip, says Suzanne Goldenberg reporting from Valvettithurai, the home village of LTTE leader Prabhakaran."

Here are some excerpts from the article:-

"In a lonely fishing village along the north coast of Sri lanka, a modest green house crumbles into the high grass. Crows divebomb through its gaping roof, and a spider weaves its web over a scrawled inscription: "This house cannot be destroyed."

"A lifetime ago, recalls Thandapanika Thesigar, head priest at the village's Hindu temple, the place was home to a boy with a fondness for film magazines and for mangoes plucked from the priest's garden.

"That boy was *Velupillai Prabhakaran,* the reclusive leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, whose teenage suicide bombers made it perhaps the most ruthless guerrilla army in the world.

"In fortress Jaffna. the Tigers seemed all-powerful, seeing off assaults by the Sri Lankan and Indian armies. For five years they ran a virtual state, levying taxes, banning movies. and dispensing their own harsh justice.

"Mr Thandapani marvels at the Tamil leader. "Whichever way you look at it'" he says, "he's a great man."

"But not, finally, invincible. The Tigers were routed from the peninsula in April last year. On the walls of Mr Prabhakaran's abandoned home, Sri Lankan soldiers have drawn their own mocking version of his flight: a Tiger frantically pedalling a bicycle away from advancing planes.

"Mr Thandapani's son, Adhavan, also left, defying' Tigers death threats on deserters, to take refuge in Germany. Adhavan's passage cost his father 450,000 rupees (about £5,000), money well spent, Mr Thandapani says. "Mr Prabhakaran's organisation is necessary but my son doesn't t need to be there."

Prabhakaran's abandoned home

"Mr Thandapani's ambivalence is symptomatic of Jaffna, the Tamil heartland which has borne the brunt of the Sri Lanka's 14-year civil war by separatist guerrillas against the Sinhalese Buddhist majority. While there are scant signs of mourning for the departed Tiger regime or for the privations of the government's economic blockade it endured there is little love for the new order.

"When the Tigers retreated, ordering Jaffna's remaining civilians to follow, people took to the open road and the jungle. Though the government has coaxed 465,000 of them back, few see the army as their saviours or believe government assurances that life on the peninsula is approaching normality.

"Daily life under the gaze of some 25.000 Sri Lankan troops remains precarious. If not for the war, Jaffna would have been home to more than one million people. Villages such as Valvettithurai are eerily deserted and up to 65 per cent of buildings have been gutted by fighting. The original fishermen have gone since deepsea fishing was banned.

"Soldiers who generally cannot speak Tamil line the roads or stare out from machine-gun nests at checkpoints that occur at intervals of a few yards. The electricity goes on for a few hours a day, and fuel shortages have forced people to use bicycles.

"This is not a normal situation because we are surrounded by the army," says the Catholic bishop of Jaffna. "For everything, the final word is with the army. They have no grass-roots support, they are never in touch with the people, so how do you expect people to come to terms with the situation? . . ."

Meanwhile, an army with a dubious human rights record is trying to come to terms with an unfamiliar mission: to convince a linguistically and culturally alien people that their interests are best served by the government.

In Point Pedro, a few miles from Valvettithurai, Brigadier Larry Wijayrathna is affecting unconcern about the assassination of two intelligence agents in September, and a spate of killings of alleged government informers, presumably by the Tigers.

"In the old days we would have gone out and killed so many innocent people ... But today it is not like that."

Brig Wijayrathna's approach owes as much to necessity as politics: the army is stretched too thin here. . ."

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Edinburgh Sidelights

"How Kumaratunga cornered Mandela"

James Murray and Geraldine Murray writing in the SCOTLAND on SUNDAY of October 26 made some interesting observations. Their full page article opens thus:

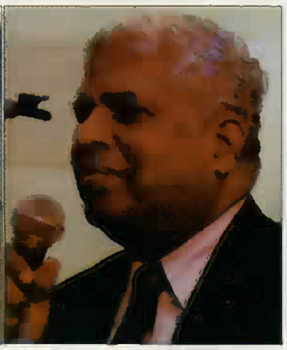
"In the private suite of the Sheraton Hotel the dimunitive(?) president of Sri Lanka headed straight for Nelson Mandela. An acolyte elbowed a passage through the crowd of star-struck journalists so that Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, in her striking burnt orange sari, could seize the moment and monopolise the Commonwealth's most charismatic figure for a few moments.

The Tamil Eelam flag & the Scottish flag

Below: British government M.P. Dennis Canavan hoists the Scottish flag

"Mandela turned to receive a fellow head of government among the less important hangers-on in the room and listened carefully to the invitation to be guest of honour at Sri Lanka's independence day celebrations. He smiled and nodded non-committally, giving nothing away except his considerable charm.....

Deirdre Mc Connell



Solicitor Sithamparapillai who spoke at the marquee

"But the cornering of Mandela was also an example of political finesse, Kumaratunga also taking the opportunity out of range of eavesdropping journalists to bend Mandela's ear about the iniquity of Tamil Tiger training camps being set up on South African territory. Behind his trademark grin Mandela didn't realise it but the Sri Lankan leader, whose government is plagued by the separatist Tamils in the north of the country was preparing the ground for a strict clampdown on Tamil terrorists who planted a bomb in central Colombo last week killing 18 people and injuring 100 more.

"Yesterday more than 1000 suspects and sympathisers were being rounded up while Kumaratunga took her seat at the executive session, ignoring the biggest protest of the entire conference with hundreds of Tamil supporters marching across the city to plead their case....

Social & Personal

Vibrant musical evening with Tamil Eelam flavour

It was the Mirudanga Arangetram of two youngsters, Shivanthan & Sivarupan, at the Sivayogam Hall, down Upper Tooting Hall, London on 19th October. What was expected to be a Mirudanga recital by two talented pupils of Nathamani Muthu Sivarajah, turned out to be something more - a full-length carnatic musical "kachcheri" complete with Ragam, Thanam, Pallavi richly provided by a set of young Tamil Eelam artistes inspired by the thavaniclad 17 year-old vocalist Sujaya Chandran.

It was a great occasion for the two brothers, with little Sivarupan showing more rhythmic abandon than the more restrained elder brother. Young Sujaya, who despite being brought up in a western environment, gave the vocal lead with perfect Tamil intonation. She was accompanied in the violin by Kalaivani Indrakumar. Sithamparanathan on the Morsing, Siva Visakan on the Ghanjira and Gananathan on the Ghatam - each one of them gave extra verve to the total performance.

With Sujaya ending the Mangalam with a final "Long live Tamil" "Long live Tamil Eelam" it turned out to be a truly memorable evening. ■

An evening of Bharata Natyam in aid of Jaffna University students

The Tamil Union of Herts (U.K.) held an evening of Bharata Natyam on 28th September in aid of the University of Jaffna Students Welfare Fund. The successful fund-raiser event took place at Watersmeet Theatre, Herts, in association with the graduate students of Lakshmi Arts Centre, an institution directed by Mrs. Selvaluxmy Ramakrishnan, and based in Edgware.

The dancers were Natasha Karunaharan, Vaishnavee Sreeharan, Kumudhini Visuvatratnam, Shobana Balaratnam, Sowmya Sreeharan and Thenuha Thiagarajan. Dances were choreographed by Mrs.Selvaluxmy, and the accompaniments were: Nattuvangam - Mrs.Selvaluxmy; Vocal - Regi George; Miruthangam - M.Balachander; Violin - B.K.Chandrasekhar: and Flute - Dr.T.Nimalraj. The programme was compered by K.Sanguhan.

University of Jaffna Students Welfare Fund was set up by the late Professor Thurairajah, ex-Vice Chancellor of the University of Jaffna, with the primary aim of providing financial assistance to needy students.

Spokesman for the Tamil Union of Herts (TUH) Logan Rasiah informs HOT SPRING that the group founded 14 years ago to promote social, cultural and educational activities among Tamils in and around the county, also mobilises support for civil human rights struggles of Tamils in Sri Lanka. The group has about 300 core members. The Union has been making regular donations of atleast £1,000 every year to charities. On that day's Bharata Natya evening itself they had raised £2,500, he said. ■

Tamil Eelam vocalist honoured in London

Pon Sundharalingam . the renowned Carnatic vocalist from Jaffna who gave a series of recitals in the U. K. was honoured under the auspices of the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (T.R.O.) recently on his last recital.

Pon Sundharalingam who lives in Canada was given musical support by his brother Pon Subachandran. Instrumental accompanists were Somasundara Desigar on the Mirudhangam. Senthilselvi Vamana nandhan on the Veena, K. Sithamparanathan on the Morsing and A.Gananathan on the Ghatam. At the Tampura was Muhunthan Balasegaram.

125th Birth Anniversary of Jaffna's Sage Yogaswami

The 125th Jayanthi (birth anniversary) of Sage Yogaswami of Jaffna is being observed in the various Sivathondan Centres in the world this year.

American disciple of Yogaswami, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami has begun a world tour carrying with him a bronze image of Yogaswami and meeting devotees of Jaffna's sage. Picture shows devotees in Hawaai , U.S.A. carrying the Yogaswami bronze in procession, with Sivaya Subramuniyaswami walking beside. At the end of the world tour, the statue is to be installed at Columbuthurai, Jaffna where the swami was born and died.

Tamil Eelam Football in the Netherlands

The finalists in the Tamil Eelam Football tournament held in the Netherlands recently - Den Melder Sports Club and the Alkmaar Sports Club

Married

Janaki - Chanthiran

Wedding bells rang for Janaki, youngest daughter of late Mr. K.Sivasambu and Mrs.I.Sivasambu of Ayily, Karainagar, Jaffna, and Chanthiran, son of late Dr.R.Subramaniam and Mrs.T. Subramaniam of Ayily, Karainagar in Sydney, Australia, at Banksia Centre, Wentworthville.

3/31-33 Lane St. Wentworthville,
NSW 2145, Australia.

* * * * *

Meera - Adhithya

The marriage took place of Adhithya, son of the late Mr.P. Narendranathan and Mrs. G. Narendranathan and Meera, daughter of Mr. S.Sithamparanathan and late Mrs. S.Sithamparanathan on Saturday 1st November at the Clay Oven Bangueting Hall Suite

1, Atlip Centre 197, Ealing Road,
Wembley, Middlesex, U.K.

Death of Bishop Ambalavanar

HOT SPRING records with regret the death of Bishop Ambalavanar (retired) of the Church of South India on October 10. He passed away in the Jaffna hospital after illness.

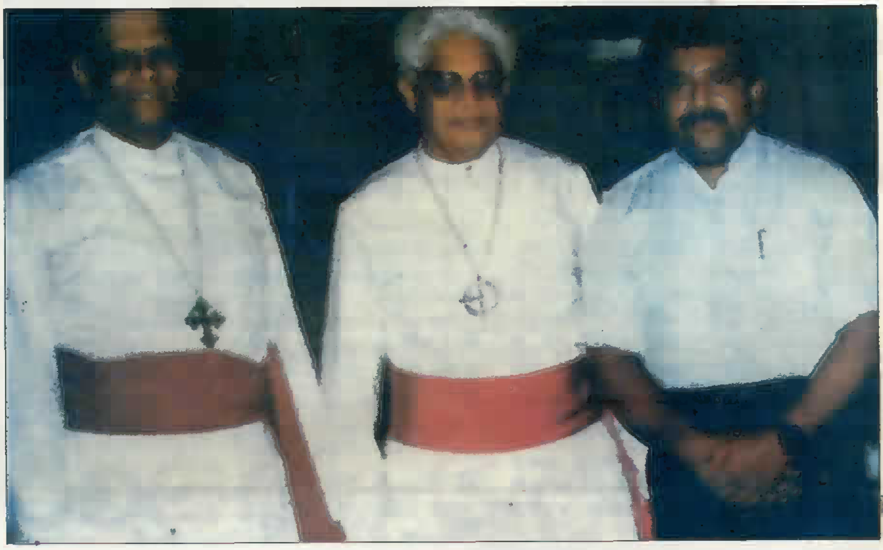
Rt.Rev.David Jeyaratnam Ambalavanar functioned as Bishop of the Jaffna Diocese of the C.S.I. from 1971 to 1993.

During his tenure, he had been actively engaged in large-scale relief and rehabilitation work. He implemented over 2,000 low cost houses for refugees and started 10 Children's Centres and eight Vocational Training Centres.

Bishop Ambalavanar was a spokesman both in Sri Lanka and at international fora for Tamil rights, and won the respect of Tamils both in Sri Lanka and India irrespective of religious differences.

Married to Dr.Chandraranee Kanapathipillai, F.R.C.O.G. he has two sons: Dr. Devathayalan F. R . C.S. and Devadarshan Ambalavanar.

He was 69 at the time of death.



Bishop Ambalavanar is pictured here (left) with LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and Bishop Kenneth Fernando, on the latter's visit to Jaffna.

Obituaries

Vincent Thamotheram

Vincent Thambinayagam Thamotheram, one-time Supreme Court judge in Sri Lanka passed away in Melbourne, Australia on 25 October. He was 82. Funeral took place on 29 October.

Mr. Thamotheram had his early education at Jaffna Central College and thereafter at St.Thomas' College, Colombo. He was called to the Bar in 1942. Entering the Attorney General's Department, he functioned as Crown Counsel from 1944 to 1968. He also acted for the Solicitor General. He was appointed Commissioner of Assize and then judge of the Supreme Court in 1970. He was also a member of the Judicial Service Commission. He retired in 1980.

Mr.Thamotheram was among the several thousands of Tamils who left the island following the State-inspired anti-Tamil pogrom of July-August 1983.

* * * * *

S.Sittampalam

The death occurred on 14th October of S.Sittampalam. Advocate, Colombo, husband of Indrani, and father of Indrajit Lankeshwara and of Dmitri Ramaneshwara. Cremated in Colombo 15th october.

Mr.Sittampalam is brother of Ponnampalam, Mrs.Kanagaratnam (USA), Sanmugaraj ah, Thiruchelvam, late Thiruarul, Arumugarajah, Navaratnarajah (Australia), Selvarajah and Mrs.Balendra, and brother-in-law of Ananda, Upali, Nissanka de Silva and Piyaseeli Abeysinghe.

3A, Kynsey Road, Colombo 8.

* * * * *

B.Mahinda

Husband of Daya, son of the late Mr. and Mrs. S.Balasingham, son-in-law of the late Dr.W. and Mrs.Balendra, brother of Leela Sivaprakasapillai, Mahes Nadarasa, Savitri Mahesan, Kamala Sabanayagam, Indra Kandaswamipillai and Chitra Sithamparapillai, Brother-in-law of late Kamala Gangadharan, Neela Sathiyalingam, and Anusha Ayaru. Died 16th October 1997 and cremated the same day at General Cemetery, Kanatte, Colombo. 67A, Ward Place, Colombo 7. Sri Lanka.

* * * * *

Cultural perfomance at Edinburgh

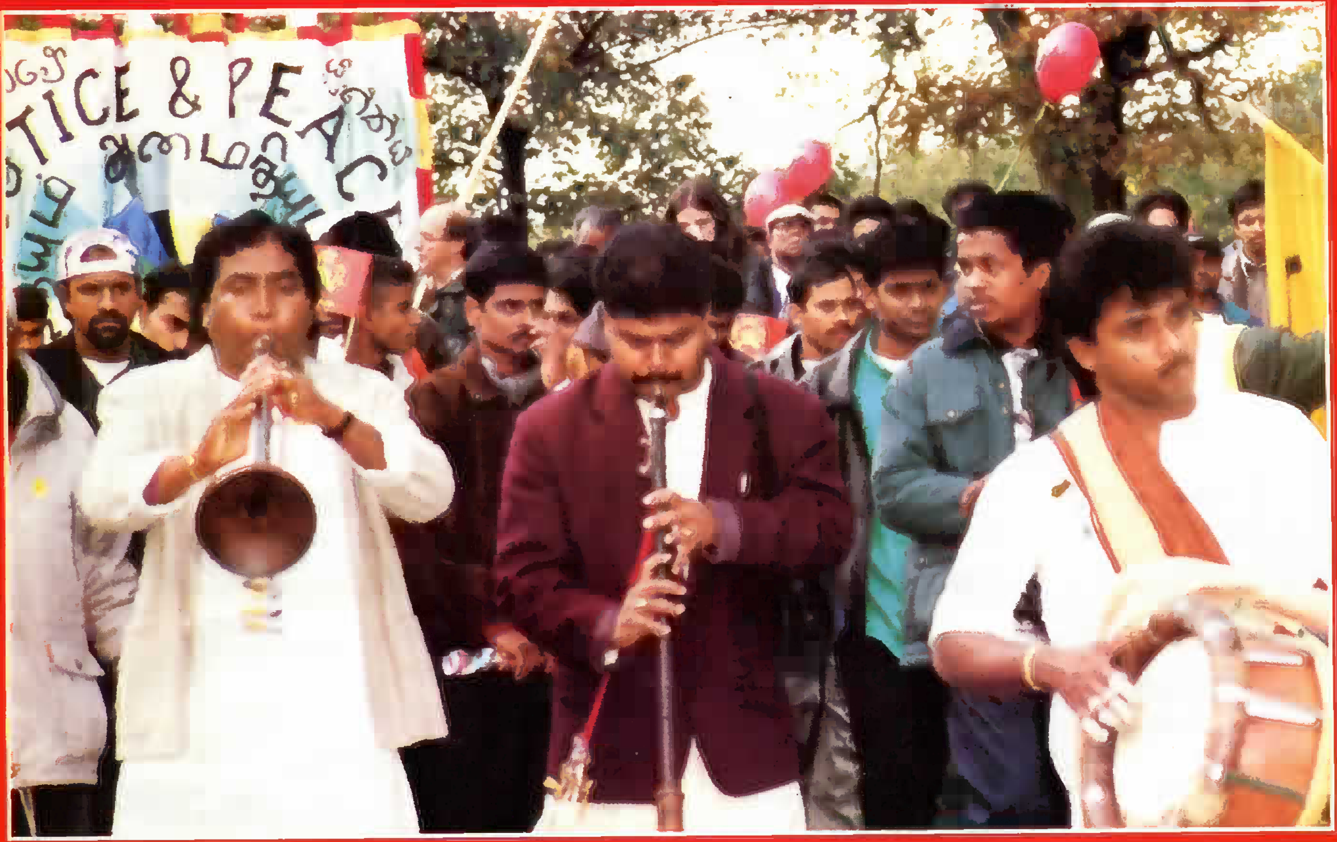
The Eelam Tamil artistes performed during the Commonwealth Edinburgh 97 Family Festival. Three items formed the grand finale to a sequence of art performances from around the world. Twenty Kavadi dancers gave an energetic and colourful performance. A dozen young Tamil women told the story of the Tamil people in expressive movement and dance, dressed in the traditional Tamil colours of red and yellow or in sombre black and white.

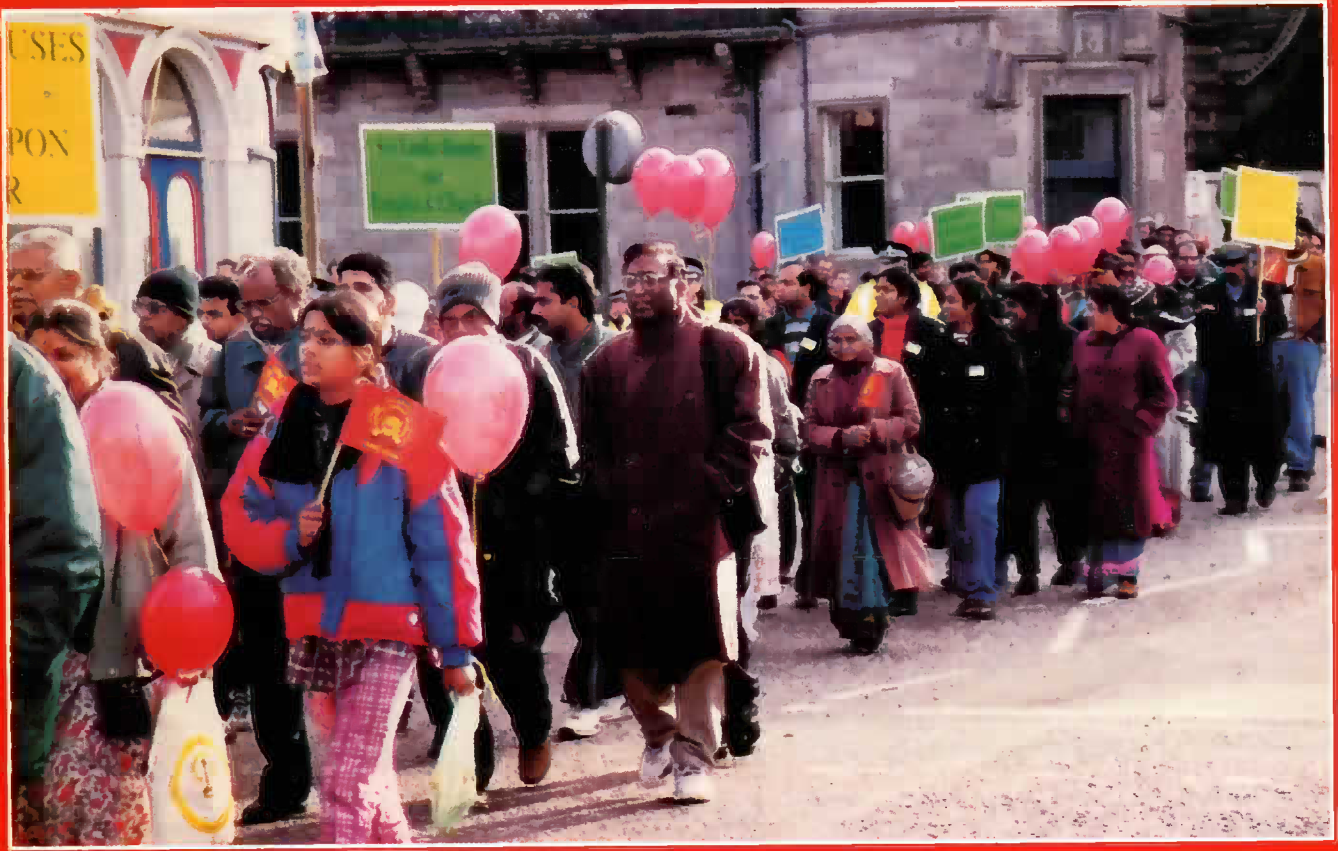
TOWARDS
A FREE
TAMIL EELAM
TOWAR
FREE
ELA

TOWARDS
A FREE
MIL EELAM

The final performance was given by six musicians (2 veena, 2 violin and 2 miruthangam players) and two vocalists. A massive audience of 1000 people, not including the Tamil visitors watched the show, applauding enthusiastically.

Edinburgh - 25 October 1997





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